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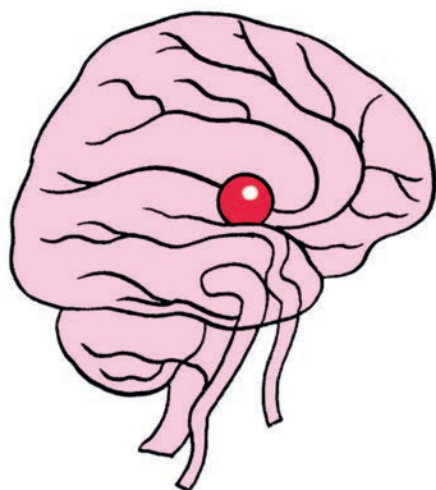
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COMICS FEATURE



Surviving with weed

Medical marijuana was an abstract concept until my sister-in-law suffered a brain aneurysm.

BY SARAH WATTS AND LUCIUS WISNIEWSKI 12

CITY LIFE



A “No Smoking” sign at the Clark/Lake station. CTA

TRANSPORTATION

A chronic problem

You can't spell “contact high” without the CTA.

By JOHN GREENFIELD

I'll never forget the first time I walked into a hot-boxed CTA el car. On a week-night two summers ago, I was heading home from the Grand Red Line station. As the train doors opened, I stepped into a haze of smoke and breathed in the telltale, love-it-or-hate-it aroma of marijuana. A group of teenagers passing a joint were nearly rolling in the aisle with laughter. Not being a weed aficionado myself, I rolled my eyes and headed to the next carriage.

Since then, it appears that the phenomenon of CTA customers illegally smoking pot or, more often, cigarettes on trains has picked up speed. Nowadays it seems like every other time I ride the 24-hour Red or Blue lines in the late evening, there's evidence that someone has recently smoked or toked on transit, or is about to. Judging by comments from Streetsblog readers and on social media, this issue seems to have shifted into high gear in recent months, especially during the brutal winter we just survived.

There's a correlation between the apparent increase in marijuana and cigarette smoking on trains and the decrease in CTA ridership

due to the rising popularity of Uber and Lyft, especially on weekends. During the first 11 months of 2017, el boarding fell by 12 percent on Saturdays and 13 percent on Sundays, compared to that period in 2015. Fewer people riding trains may embolden smoking scofflaws to light up, since it lowers the chances of other passengers reporting them. The fine for smoking or vaping on CTA property, enforced by Chicago Police Department officers, ranges from \$100 to \$300.

A Streetsblog reader called my attention to the issue earlier this year, complaining that he's exposed to secondhand smoke once or twice a week on the train, and said the problem is especially prevalent on the Forest Park branch of the Blue Line. “It is clear to me that they . . . do not care about their fellow passengers or any possible repercussions.”

In response to a Facebook query I posted, Danielle McKinnie, a technical trainer at a hospital, also told me CTA smoking is on the rise. After a recent PM commute on the Red Line, during which people were walking through the train smoking, her husband picked her up at 95th Street. “He asked where I had been ➔

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CITY LIFE

continued from 3

because I smelled like smoke,” she said. “He thought I’d been to a club.”

Fans of the Twitter feed CTA Fails concur. “Literally, actually sick of all the smokers on the Blue Line,” tweeted one. “Every day, there’s a car full of smoke.”

“Nothing like [coming from] the AM commute reeking of weed,” tweeted another. “We will all surely be making great impressions today.”

Not everyone has a problem with getting a CTA contact high. “I was stuck on the Blue Line once, with everyone freaking out and getting pissed,” production designer Vanessa Mathai said in response to my Facebook post. “Some dude pulls out a huge joint and smokes up half the car while we waited. Just lovely!”

But assuming you’re not cool with a lungful of someone else’s dank weed or cancer-stick smoke, what’s the best response? You could confront them, but that carries a certain amount of risk. Last month CBS noted that reported incidents of violent crime on CTA platforms increased from 263 cases in 2014 to 447 incidents in 2018. Already this year we’ve seen everything from a CTA worker being used as a human shield and repeatedly stabbed during a fight at the Roosevelt station, to a hammer attack on a Red Line car near Grand.

As an alternative to a direct confrontation with a smoker, a CTA spokesperson recommended switching cars at a stop and using the intercom to notify the train operator. Of course, that could delay the train and piss off fellow customers. The rep also noted that “No Smoking” signs are ubiquitous on CTA property, and the agency recently launched a PR campaign to remind customers that puffing on public transportation is verboten.

So why do people still do it? To gain some insight, I rode the Red Line at 11 PM on a Tuesday and interviewed a few smokers. After boarding a southbound train at Jackson, I saw men walking between cars, calling out, “Squares [loose cigarettes], packs.” After switching cars a few times myself, I encountered a young man with braids who was rolling tobacco in a brown tobacco leaf. He agreed that smoking is becoming more prevalent on public transportation. “It’s because there’s homeless people. They don’t want to leave [the system] to smoke and then have to pay again.”

There are currently about 80,000 homeless people in our city, according to an estimate from the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. Anecdotaly, people taking shelter overnight on the Red and Blue lines, often with large

parcels in tow, or sleeping horizontally across the bench seating, seem to be increasingly common.

Nicole Richardson, vice president of clinical operations for Thresholds, a social service agency that helps people with mental illness, blamed Chicago’s continuing homelessness crisis on a shortage of affordable housing, exacerbated by factors like the reduction of the number of SROs due to gentrification. While she didn’t draw a direct line between the closure of half of the city’s mental health clinics under the Emanuel administration and the high incidence of mentally ill people living on the street, she said “a gap in social services across our entire system” is contributing to the problem.

Thresholds has six outreach workers who try to build trust with homeless folks on the Red and Blue lines, as well as in the Thompson Center, the Pedway, the Harold Washington Library, and Lower Wacker. They offer food, water, clothing, and fellowship in hopes of eventually connecting people in need with social services.

Asked about a possible link between homelessness and an increase in train smoking, Richardson pointed to studies that suggest nicotine is more addictive for people with schizophrenia. People with mental illness have also been found to smoke at two to four times the rate of the general population. “Like any other drug, nicotine is a coping mechanism,” she said.

Richardson acknowledged that smoking on transit is problematic. “I’m not a smoker, so I do find it annoying when I have to walk by somebody who is.”

The CTA needs to find a better solution to this vexing problem, which could further drag down ridership. Perhaps installing airplane-style smoke detectors?

But in the meantime, those of us who don’t need to shelter on trains should keep some perspective. Smoky el cars and other homeless-related quality of life issues on the CTA reflect Chicago’s larger problems. Last week the City Council approved TIF funding deals for the upscale Lincoln Yards and The 78 megadevelopments. Many, including the *Reader’s* Ben Joravsky, have argued that means \$2.4 billion in future property tax revenue, which otherwise might have been used to address Chicago’s many social justice challenges—including homelessness—has gone up in smoke. 

 @greenfieldjohn



Matt Muse at Taste of Chicago 2018 DAVON CLARK

PREVIEW

City and neighborhood festivals

Good times, good times

APRIL

Sound of Silent Film Festival, 4/20, Davis Theater
Afro Fusion Easter Day Party, 4/21, The Promontory
CineYouth Festival, 4/26-28, Music Box Theatre
Windy City Horrorama, 4/26-28, Davis Theater
Chicago Wine Fest, 4/27, Lincoln Park Zoo
Randolph Street Market, 4/27-28, West Loop

MAY

Kids and Kites Festival, 5/4, various locations
MoonRunners Music Festival, 5/4-5, Reggies
James Beard Awards Gala, 5/6, Lyric Opera
Hyde Park Food Truck Fest, 5/11
Renegade Craft Fair, 5/11-12, Pilsen
Chicago Riverwalk Season Celebration, 5/13-19
Día del Niño, 5/18, Pilsen
Open Air Music Festival, 5/18-19, Seatgeek Stadium
Hyde Park Handmade, 5/19, The Promontory
Sweets and Snacks Expo, 5/21-23, McCormick Place
House Music Conference and Festival, 5/23-25, various locations
International Mr. Leather, 5/23-27, Congress Plaza Hotel

Mole de Mayo Festival, 5/24-26, Pilsen
Live on the Lake!, 5/24-9/1, Navy Pier
Belmont-Sheffield Music Festival, 5/25-26, Lakeview
Navy Pier Fireworks, 5/25-9/31, Navy Pier
Bike the Drive, 5/26, Lake Shore Drive
Maifest Chicago, 5/30-6/2, Lincoln Square
Chicago Gospel Music Festival, 5/31-6/1, Chicago Cultural Center and Millennium Park
Do Division Street Fest, 5/31-6/2, West Town

JUNE

Gold Coast Art Fair, 6/1-2
Hyde Park Community Art Fair, 6/1-2
57th Art Street Fair, 6/1-2, Hyde Park
Millennium Park Summer Film Series, 6/5-8/14
Harper Court Music Series, 6/5, Hyde Park
Chicago Blues Festival, 6/7-9, Millennium Park
Spring Awakening, 6/7-9, Poplar Creek
Andersonville Midsommarfest, 6/7-9
Old Town Art Fair, 6/8-9
Wells Street Art festival, 6/8-9, Old Town
Printers Row Lit Fest, 6/8-9
LatiNxt, 6/14-15, Navy Pier
Taste of Randolph, 6/14-16,

West Loop
Chicago Taco & Tequila Fest, 6/15, Lincoln Park
Punk Black Chicago Fest Edition, 6/15-16, Beat Kitchen
Hyde Park Handmade, 6/16, The Promontory
Puerto Rican People's Parade, 6/16, Humboldt Park
Pilsen Taco Fest 2019, 6/16-17
World's Largest Block Party, 6/21-22, Greektown
Chi-Soul Fest, 6/21-22, Navy Pier
Gold Coast Greek Fest, 6/21-23, Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Chicago
Ruido Fest, 6/21-23, Union Park
Country Lakeshake, 6/21-23, Huntington Bank Pavilion at Northerly Island
Chicago Food Truck Festival in the South Loop, 6/22-23
Chicago Pride Fest, 6/22-23, Lakeview
Ravenswood on Tap, 6/22-23
Mamby on the Beach, 6/23-24, Oakwood Beach
Chicago Summerdance, 6/27-8/24, various locations
Back Lot Bash, 6/28-30, Andersonville
Dyke March, 6/29, Little Village
Navy Pier Pride, 6/29
Pride in the Park, 6/29,

Grant Park
Beverly Art Walk, 6/29
Lyrical Lemonade Festival, 6/29-30, Douglas Park
Logan Square Arts Festival, 6/29-30
Chi Town Hot Sauce Expo, 6/29-30, Seatgeek Stadium
TRQPITECA Queer Pride Chicago, 6/30, Chinatown
Chicago Pride Parade, 6/30, Lakeview

JULY

Windy City Ribfest, 7/4-6, Uptown
Windy City Black Pride, 7/4-7, various locations
Harper Court Music Series, 7/5, Hyde Park
West Fest, 7/5-7, West Town
Chosen Few DJs Picnic & Festival, 7/6, Jackson Park
Chicago Michelada Fest 2019, 7/6-7, Pilsen
Taste of Chicago, 7/10-14, Grant Park
Square Roots Craft Brew & Music Festival, 7/12-14, Lincoln Square
Roscoe Village Burger Fest,

7/13-15
Chinatown Summer Fair, 7/15
Wicker Park Fest, 7/26-28
Pitchfork Music Festival, 7/19-21, Union Park
Silver Room Block Party, 7/20, Hyde Park
Water Lantern Festival, 7/20, Humboldt Park
Dearborn Garden Walk, 7/21, Old Town
Fiesta del Sol, 7/25-28, Pilsen
Wakandacon, 7/26-28, Hyatt Regency McCormick
Ghana Fest, 7/27, Washington Park
Chicago Margarita Festival, 7/27-28, Navy Pier
South Loop Beer and Cider Fest, 7/27
Bantu Fest, 7/27-28, Hyde Park

AUGUST

Harper Court Music Series, 8/1, Hyde Park
Lollapalooza, 8/1-4, Grant Park
Belize Day in the Park, 8/4, Burnham Park

Out of Space Festival, 8/8-11, Evanston
Chicago Hot Dog Fest, 8/9-11, Lincoln Park
Retro on Roscoe, 8/9-11, Roscoe Village
Bud Billiken Parade, 8/10, Bronzeville
My House Music Festival, 8/10-11, Pilsen
Chicago's Little Italy Festa, 8/16
Edison Park Fest, 8/16-18
Windy City West Indian Carnival, 8/17, Harvey
Sangria Festival, 8/17-18, Humboldt Park
Chicago Air and Water Show, 8/17-18, North Avenue Beach
South Shore Summer Festival, 8/21
Taste of Greektown, 8/23-25
Chicago Jazz Festival, 8/23-9/1, Chicago Cultural Center and Millennium Park
Villapalooza, 8/24, Little Village
Out at Wrigley, 8/25
México en el Corazón, 8/30, Millennium Park
North Coast Music Festival, 8/30-9/2, Northerly Island
Taste of Polonia Festival, 8/30-9/2, Jefferson Park

SEPTEMBER

Chicago Lowrider Festival, 9/2, Pilsen
Throwback Music Festival, 9/6-8, Gladstone Park
Renegade Craft Fair, 9/7-8, Wicker Park
Ride for Life Chicago, 9/7-8, Chicago-Michigan
Jerk, Seafood, and Vegan Festival, 9/7-8, South Loop
Out in the Park, 9/8, Six Flags Great America
Riot Fest, 9/13-15, Douglas Park
World Music Festival, 9/13-29, various locations
Fulton Market Harvest Fest, 9/14-16
West Loop Art Fest, 9/16-17
Expo Chicago, 9/19-22, Navy Pier
Edgewater Arts Festival, 9/28-29
Hyde Park Jazz Festival, 9/28-29
Oktoberfest, 9/28-30, Lakeview



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“**N**ie dla psa kielbasa,” is a sardonic thing you can say in Polish when something is (or should be) unattainable for someone who desires it. It means “the sausage is not for dogs.” Not speaking Polish, it’s precisely the way I feel

when I get a craving for kielbasa and find myself in one of the city’s wondrous Polish delis, such as Rich’s, Dunajec, or Kurowski’s. These places all smell bewitchingly of smoke, pork, garlic, and spice, and all feature long rows of dangling meat, hung far out of reach behind the counter. Each individual expression of

girth, length, and hue is labeled with its Polish name, and because these places are often thick with people who know exactly what they want and how to ask for it, there’s little chance for someone who grew up on the featureless Hillshire Farm casserole standby to figure out what’s what.

It turns out churchgoing, Polish-speaking Poles experience a similar longing—at least on Holy Saturday, aka the Harrowing of Hell, when Jesus descended into the underworld on the day after he was crucified to save history’s captive souls. This is the day—this Saturday, in fact—of Świąconka, or when you bring your Easter basket to church to get blessed by the priest in advance of breaking your Lenten fast. It’s not filled with jelly beans and Peeps, but real food (ham, cheese, salt), symbolizing different things. Eggs are for new hope, new life. Bread is the staff of life. Butter molded into the shape of lambs signifies the end of Lent. Sausages mean abundance and, if you’re particularly hungry, they smell like it too.

“When you’re taking that thing to church and getting it ready in the morning, the smell is the first thing that hits you,” reports Sylvia Dziemian, who DJs under the name M. Sylvia, and who helped her grandparents make sausage when she was little. “When you’re in church waiting for the priest to get done, there’s also a very special kind of smell in the air, all coming from the sausage. Ideally, you’re fasting. You’ve been abstaining from meat on Fridays, and you certainly shouldn’t eat before you bring the basket home. However, as soon as you get in the car, you grab a piece of that sausage before you grab the steering wheel.”

You can put whatever kind of kielbasa you like in your Easter basket. They make about 20 cured and smoked sausages at Andy’s Deli & Mikolajczyk Sausage Shop, the reigning 101-year-old godfather of Polish sausage in Chicago, with its own dedicated Wisconsin slaughterhouse, Jefferson Park flagship deli, and Garfield Park processing plant. But most people use a special shortened ring of their standard Polish sausage (polska kielbasa), according to general manager Simon Kolasa, whose uncle Andy Kolasa bought the business



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back in the 80s. Andy's also makes a special mini-ham that can fit snugly into an Easter basket, along with some 250 other meat products, which are stocked in every major Polish grocery and deli around Chicagoland, and shipped all over the country.

The end of Lent, when everybody's anxious to satisfy their nagging meat tooth, is a particularly busy time of year for Empire Andy's, but Kolasa still found time to walk me through the plant last week—a labyrinthine sausage forest—and give me a short course in Polish sausageology, which led, along with additional guidance from special correspondents Dziemian and Patryk Carwinski, to the following, not-comprehensive kielbasa cheat sheet, which you can refer to the next time you feel like you deserve some sausage.

1 Domowa (pronounced dome-of-ah, “homemade”): A dark, firm, relatively dry coarsely ground nitrite-nitrate free sausage, with a hint of marjoram. According to Kolasa, customers sometimes worry the sausage has spoiled due to the interior, untinted by nitrites and nitrates. It hasn't.

Grillowa (grill-of-ah, “grill”): A plump, tender, fatty, juicy, not-too-spicy tube appropriate for grilling (not pictured).

Jalawcowa (yah-wah-vts-of-ah, “juniper”): A firm, semidry pork and beef sausage spiced with juniper berry, nutmeg, allspice, mustard, smoked sausage (not pictured).

Kiszka, aka kaszanka (kee-shhh-kah, beef blood and barley sausage): Good fried with eggs, though the encased version, *kiszka krupnik*, is durable enough to be grilled without falling apart.

2 Kabanos (cob-ah-no-sss): Long, thin, lean snack sticks with a hint of allspice, in a few varieties, such as the chewy smoked and dried *kabanosy suszane* and a chicken variety: *kabanosy z zury*.

Kielbaski pyszne (que-wi-bus-kee pish-neh, barbecue sausage): Thin, hot-dog-shaped smoked pork links, suitable for the grill. Same formula as the grillowa except in a collagen casing, which allows for precisely controlled uniform weight from sausage to sausage.

Krajana (croix-anna, “sliced,” Canadian-style): A long, girthy, heavily smoked sausage

stuffed with bigger chunks of lean meat. Good for sandwiches.

Krakowska parzona (craw-k-of-ska posh-on-ah, “of Kraków steamed”): A long, coarsely ground, dry, lean sausage, with a peppery kick named for Poland's second-largest city. People hang it at home and dry it out. Seasoned with allspice, pepper, coriander, and garlic, it's first steamed, then smoked. Good for sandwiches with a pronounced hammy taste.

Lesna (lesh-nah, “Forest”): A darker caramel-colored casing jackets a cherry wood-smoked garlic and marjoram-seasoned grind.

Mysliwska (mi-shh-leave-ska, “Hunter”): Semidry, lean, dark and smoky, it's named for the hunters who may have carried it as provisioning. It has a peppery kick that can stand up in bigos, or hunter's stew.

3 Szyszkowa (shish-co-va, *podhalanska*): Hailing from the southern highland Podhale region, it's molded in a distinctive flower-shaped casing. It has a coarse grind that holds together like a deli meat.

Slaska (shh-low-ska): A regional sausage with an 80/20 meat to fat ratio, this is a bit leaner than most and a bit more expensive. Ideal for grilling.

4 Surowo-wędzona (sur-o-v-o v-e-w-ds-oh-nah): A fresh, cold-smoked sausage with a raw, chorizo-like texture. Some people hang it to dry, others remove the casing and fry it up.

5 Swojska (swoy-ska, “pork polish sausage”): Another long, strongly smoked, nitrate-free old-style link.

6 Weselna (ve-sell-nah, “Wedding”): A double-smoked pork sausage ideal for sobering up drunk wedding guests.

7 Wiejska (v-yay-ska, “country”): Andy's most garlicky pork sausage and its best online seller.

8 Zywiecka (zh-v-yets-kah): Hailing from the south central brewery town, this large sausage has a very hammy taste, and a thick artificial casing, with big chunks of lean meat in the grind. 

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NEWS & POLITICS



Byron Sigcho-Lopez, alderman-elect of the 25th Ward, at a protest against Lincoln Yards  CHARLES EDWARD MILLER

POLITICS

Chicago poli-tricks as usual

Aldermen just raised property taxes to pay for Rahm's TIF handout to his pals.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

A few days after Mayor-elect Lori Lightfoot raised the white flag on Mayor Rahm's \$2.4 billion TIF deals, I happened to see *Knock Down the House*, an uplifting documentary about Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's upset triumph in last year's Democratic House primary in New York City.

Since winning that election, Ocasio-Cortez has moved on to Congress, where she's been a fearless champion for progressive issues.

In contrast, Lightfoot capitulated even though she had campaigned against both TIF deals and, having won 75 percent of the vote, had what you might call a rock-solid mandate to take a stand against such taxpayer-funded scams.

I guess this is why Chicago remains the Second City, at least when it comes to progressive politics.

Lightfoot argued that she didn't have the City Council votes to stop the deals and so, having wrung concessions on minority hiring, signed on to them with a word of warning.

"I was very clear with the developers: Enjoy this moment in the sun, because you're never going to get a deal like this again out of the city of Chicago as long as I'm mayor," Lightfoot said in a press statement.

The standard analysis from many aldermen is that Lightfoot had no choice because Mayor Rahm had enough council votes to pass both deals no matter how much she resisted. So better to avoid a fight rather than to go down fighting for what you believe. Presuming you believed it in the first place.

That logic is so Chicago, my friends. We like to think of ourselves as the Monsters of the Midway—think Dick Butkus tackling running backs in the open field.

NEWS & POLITICS

But when it comes to standing up for our convictions, we're more like Marc Trestman's 2014 Bears—down 42 points at halftime to the Packers, and rolling over without a fight.

If AOC operated like this, she'd have told Trump: I'm voting to fund this wall, but not the next one!

Okay, maybe I'm being too hard on Mayor-elect Lightfoot. After all, she didn't negotiate these deals. That honor goes to Mayor Rahm—just one final middle finger to the taxpayers as he heads out the door.

To remind you, Tax Increment Financing is a surcharge applied to your property tax bill, ostensibly to generate money to eradicate blight in low-income neighborhoods. Instead, it's largely used to underwrite upscale development in already-gentrifying communities that would probably get developed without a handout.

In other words, it's Christmas-come-early for the well-connected. In this case, Sterling Bay will get \$1.3 billion to underwrite its Lincoln Yards project on the north side, and Related Midwest will get \$1.1 billion for the 78 in the South Loop.

What went down at the last City Council meeting was classic Chicago poli-tricks. It's tough to decide which batch of aldermen was more pathetic. Was it south and west side aldermen who supported the deals, even though their communities continue to lose in the TIF game?

Or was it the north side "reformers"—like Deb Mell, James Cappleman, and Tom Tunney? While running for office, they promised to vote against Lincoln Yards, only to turn right around and vote yes, once their campaigns were over.

At this point, I should give a shout-out to the aldermen who voted no on both deals: John Arena, George Cardenas, Pat Dowell, Leslie Hairston, Sophia King, Harry Osterman, Ameya Pawar, Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, Brendan Reilly, Susan Sadlowski-Garza, Michele Smith, and Scott Waguespack.

In search of other good news, I'd like to report that the last TIF vote ought to put to rest the issue of aldermanic privilege.

This is one where we're supposed to be outraged because aldermen supposedly have unfettered control over zoning and projects in their wards.

Another thing about Chicago: we're endlessly railing against bogus issues, like alder-

manic privilege, while looking the other way when it comes to real ones, like TIF abuse.

In reality, aldermen only get to control the relatively small things—like sidewalk café permits—that the mayor doesn't care about.

But as soon as the mayor has a horse in the race, it's bye-bye aldermanic privilege. We first learned this in 2008, when Mayor Daley got the City Council to approve moving the Children's Museum to Grant Park, even as Brendan Reilly, the local alderman, begged them not to.

The current hypocrisy was on full display in the vote on the 78, a massive project earmarked for land along the Chicago River just south of Roosevelt Road.

That project lies in the 25th ward, whose current alderman, Danny Solis, has been out of sight for the last few months, or ever since word broke that he was wearing a wire to gather dirt on Alderman Ed Burke.

The 25th's incoming alderman—Byron Sigcho-Lopez—says he's against the 78 TIF handout. The council voted for it anyway.

Don't worry, Byron, I'm sure they'll let you approve all the awning permits your heart desires.

One other thing—by creating these two Tax Increment Financing districts, the City Council effectively took two chunks of valuable real estate in rapidly developing communities and made them tax-exempt.

Because this land won't generate new property taxes for our taxing bodies (schools, parks, county, etc.) for at least the next 23 years, the rest of you will have to pay more. In other words, the City Council just voted to raise your property taxes, Chicago.

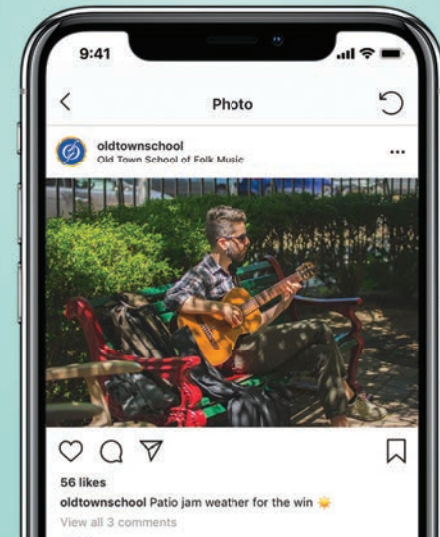
Did I mention that Sterling Bay gets to spend \$25 million of its handout on lawyers and flacks? Well, they do. Let's see if our leaders are as generous when it comes to funding our schools.

The council TIF votes went down a week after the mayoral election in which only 32 percent of the voters bothered to show up. There are many reasons why voter turnout remains pathetically low. But one frequent complaint is that Chicago politics is a con game run by hustlers who will sell you out at the drop of a hat, so why bother?

After last week's TIF votes, I can't blame Chicagoans for reaching this conclusion. 

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NEWS & POLITICS



Unplanned

ON CULTURE

Parenthood planned and *Unplanned*

The battle over reproductive rights intensifies with revisions to federal policy and a new movie.

By **DEANNA ISAACS**

Here's one thing about reproductive rights I know for sure: If men were the ones who had to carry a pregnancy for nine months, go through an excruciating childbirth, and then be responsible for the care and well-being of another person for the next several decades, they'd be picking up their over-the-counter abortion pills at the drugstore along with their shaving lotion. Maybe even at the grocery store. Nobody would bat an eye.

That's not how it works, however. At least not yet. And in these ill-tempered waning days of the patriarchy, Planned Parenthood—founded more than a century ago for the radical purpose of helping women get a handle on their reproductive lives—is the target of a pair

of high-profile attacks, one from the White House, the other playing at a movie theater near you.

The federal offensive, which comes in the form of revisions to Title X, the only federal program dedicated to supporting affordable birth control and reproductive health care, was on the mind of nurse-midwife Kai Tao when she spoke at a Health & Medicine Policy Research Group event earlier this month.

Tao is a former deputy commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health, a former vice president of clinical operations at Planned Parenthood of Illinois, and the founder, last year, of Juno4Me, a nonprofit that connects women to providers of reversible, long-term birth control (IUDs and implants).

NEWS & POLITICS

She said the Trump administration changes to Title X will prevent clinics from giving referrals to abortion providers, even when patients request them. Instead, they'll be allowed to withhold information about legal pregnancy termination as an option and mandated to provide referrals for prenatal care. In addition, groups receiving Title X funding would have to be financially and physically separate from any abortion provider.

"They're doing as much as they can so that [organizations like Planned Parenthood] won't take the [federal] money," Tao said.

On March 5, Planned Parenthood and the American Medical Association sued the Trump administration to prevent the revisions from going into effect. In a press release issued that day, AMA president Barbara McAneny called the changes "a government gag rule" and said, "The administration wants to block physicians from providing full information [to their patients] about all of their health care options and from providing appropriate referrals for care."

Planned Parenthood of Illinois president Jennifer Welch said in the same statement, "This gag rule is just the latest step in the Trump-Pence Administration's efforts to ban abortion, limit access to sexual and reproductive health care, and block care at Planned Parenthood."

If you're an Illinois resident, you've got a dog in this fight: last month, Illinois joined 19 other states and the District of Columbia in a lawsuit that challenges the Title X changes as unconstitutional. Illinois attorney general Kwame Raoul said in the same statement, "Title X allows the state of Illinois to provide critical funding to 28 agencies around the state, which provide vital health care services to tens of thousands of Illinois' most vulnerable residents." (According to 2010 data from the Guttmacher Institute, 52 percent of all pregnancies in Illinois were unintended, and the rate was higher for women living on incomes below the federal poverty level.)

A motion for a preliminary injunction is pending; otherwise, the changes will go into effect in early May. The next hearing date is April 23.

Meanwhile, down at the multiplex, *Unplanned*, a film based on the 2011 memoir of the same title by Abby Johnson, a former Planned Parenthood clinic director turned anti-abortion activist, is playing to the crowd that wants to see Trump's Title X makeover implemented.

Unplanned is a blend of Hallmark-style romance and unintentionally campy horror flick, with an R rating, a patriarchal subtext (she's "baby" to the husband who always knows best), and a happy, bulldozer-at-the-clinic ending. Ashley Bratcher stars as Johnson, who had two abortions herself and a successful eight-year career at Planned Parenthood (employee of the year!) before viewing an ultrasound-assisted procedure and undergoing what's presented as an instant conversion, but makes more sense as a homecoming for the devoted daughter in a staunchly anti-abortion family. Her over-the-top boss, a villainous clinic director, refuses to call an ambulance when a procedure goes wrong, and threatens retribution powered by "Soros, Gates, and Buffett" when Johnson joins the objectors who've been praying at the clinic fence for years. The film's most dramatically staged moment—a blood-in-the-toilet horror scene with stark camera angles and escalating tension in the score—may have been inspired by *Psycho*, but, frankly, wouldn't look all that unfamiliar to any woman.

I asked Planned Parenthood of Illinois for a response to the film and got this reply from spokesperson Paula Thornton Greear: "The claims in the film are simply false. . . . We understand that people have different thoughts and feelings about abortion, and we know that people's beliefs can change over time. However, one's change of view on the issues of abortion and birth control do not justify false claims about Planned Parenthood's services and mission."

Planned Parenthood has posted a petition on its website asking that the changes to Title X be dropped; the public's invited to sign on here. And this isn't its only battle: last week Ohio governor Mike DeWine signed off on a state law that will prohibit abortions once a heartbeat can be detected. That's as early as six weeks—a deadline that could close the termination option for women before they're aware that they're pregnant.

With two Trump appointees now on the Supreme Court, abortion opponents in multiple states are drafting restrictive laws at a furious pace. In opening remarks at the Health & Medicine event, executive director Margie Schaps noted that, "In 2019 alone, 297 anti-abortion bills have been introduced in state legislatures." Their ultimate goal: to enact the one that could make its way through the system to a high court overturn of *Roe v. Wade*. 

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IN AUGUST 2013, MEDICAL MARIJUANA BECAME LEGAL IN ILLINOIS FOR A SMALL NUMBER OF QUALIFYING PATIENTS.

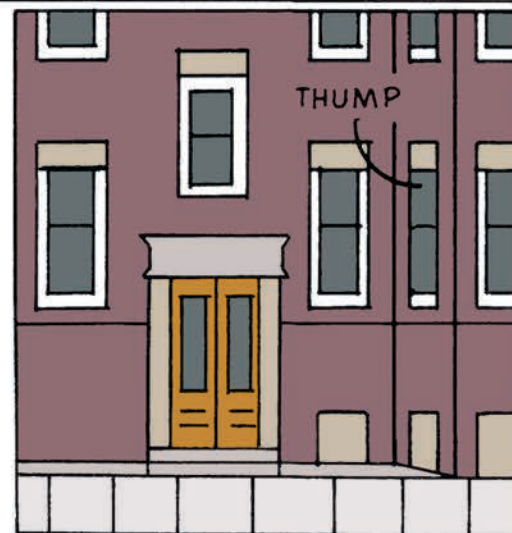
SINCE THEN ACCESS HAS EXPANDED. PATIENTS WHO HAVE A "DEBILITATING CONDITION," AS DEFINED BY THE ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, CAN PROCURE WEED FROM A DISPENSARY WITH A DOCTOR'S PRESCRIPTION.



CURRENTLY OVER 44,000 PEOPLE USE MEDICAL MARIJUANA IN ILLINOIS — BUT UNTIL RECENTLY, IT WAS AN ABSTRACT CONCEPT FOR ME. I KNEW NOBODY WHO USED IT. I HAD NO IDEA HOW MUCH IT COULD HELP SOMEONE WITH CHRONIC PAIN.



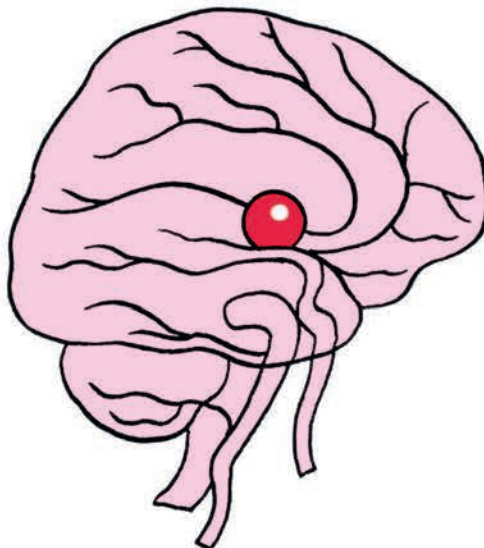
ALL OF THAT CHANGED LAST AUGUST.



FIVE MINUTES AFTER COMING HOME FROM WORK, MY SISTER-IN-LAW, BEKAH, COLLAPSED IN HER APARTMENT IN LOGAN SQUARE. SHE WAS RUSHED TO THE HOSPITAL AND DIAGNOSED WITH A RUPTURED BRAIN ANEURYSM AND SUBARACHNOID HEMORRHAGE.



ONE THIRD OF PATIENTS WHO SUFFER A LIFE-THREATENING STROKE LIKE BEKAH MAKE A FULL RECOVERY, ONE THIRD WILL SURVIVE WITH A DISABILITY, AND ONE THIRD WILL DIE.



FOR WEEKS BEKAH LAY IN THE ICU AT A NEARBY HOSPITAL, SLOWLY RECOVERING FROM THE STROKE.



WE WAITED, AGONIZED, TO FIND OUT WHICH THIRD SHE'D BE.

AFTER TWO WEEKS BEKAH WAS ALLOWED TO RETURN HOME. ALL OF US, HER FAMILY, BREATHED A SIGH OF RELIEF—SHE WOULD LIVE.



BUT LIFE LOOKED DIFFERENT POST-STROKE.

I HAD THIS ALL-OVER PAIN AND TOTAL EXHAUSTION.

IT TOOK ALL MY ENERGY JUST TO MOVE FROM THE BED TO THE COUCH. I COULD BARELY LEAN DOWN TO PICK UP THE TOILET SEAT.

HER HUSBAND—MY BROTHER—HELPED HER BACK AND FORTH FROM THE COUCH TO THE BATHROOM.

ABOUT A MONTH AFTER COMING HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL, SHE DECIDED TO TRY WEED. BECAUSE TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY IS LISTED AS ONE OF THE "DEBILITATING CONDITIONS" THAT QUALIFY PATIENTS FOR MEDICAL MARIJUANA, BEKAH WAS ABLE TO GET A PRESCRIPTION AND REGISTER WITH A LOCAL DISPENSARY.

BEKAH'S HEADACHES WERE RELENTLESS.

THEY FELT LIKE A WAVE OF BLOOD WAS POURING OUT OF MY HEAD.

OR I WOULD HAVE THIS SUPER SHARP PAIN THAT WOULD KIND OF PULSE AROUND MY HEAD.

THE PAIN LASTED ALL DAY.



WITH WEED

BY SARAH WATTS
& LUCIUS WISNIEWSKI

IT WAS ALL TRIAL AND ERROR TO FIND THE STRAINS THAT HELPED THE MOST. I SPENT HOURS LOOKING UP INFORMATION ON LEAFLY, AND THROUGH SUPPORT GROUPS ON FACEBOOK.

AND FINDING THE RIGHT STRAINS WASN'T THE ONLY CHALLENGE. DEPENDING ON THE MECHANISM OF DELIVERY, THE EFFECTS OF EACH STRAIN FELT DIFFERENT.

I STARTED USING FLOWER AND I WOULD VAPE IT. FROM THERE I TRIED TINCTURES, EDIBLES, AND RSO*.

WHEN IT STARTS HITTING, IT FEELS LIKE ALL MY PAIN IS MELTING AWAY. MY HEAD BECOMES LIGHTER, MY BRAIN FOG CLEARS AND MY SENSITIVITIES TO LIGHTS AND SOUNDS LESSEN.

* RICK SIMPSON OIL

I'M ABLE TO HAVE STRAINS FOR EVERY-DAY ALL-DAY USE, STRAINS THAT PIN-POINT EXTREME BRAIN PAIN DAYS, STRAINS TO RELAX AND SLEEP THROUGH THE NIGHT, AND STRAINS THAT JUST MAKE YOU FEEL HAPPY AND DO SOME HIGH KICKS.

THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERY SEAT ON THIS ROLLERCOASTER.

TODAY, BEKAH IS STILL ADJUSTING TO HER NEW NORMAL: SHORT TRIPS OUT OF THE APARTMENT CAN LEAVE HER FEELING EXHAUSTED FOR DAYS. THE ANXIETY THAT SHE COULD HAVE ANOTHER RUPTURED ANEURYSM IS ALWAYS PRESENT.

BUT WEED HAS MADE IT POSSIBLE FOR HER TO FUNCTION. SHE'S BACK TO DOING YOGA AGAIN.

SHE CAN VISIT WITH FRIENDS, SOMETIMES FOR HOURS.

IT'S ALMOST LIKE SHE'S COMPLETELY BACK TO NORMAL AGAIN.

HUSBAND, JAKE

WHILE THERE'S A LOT THAT DOCTORS STILL DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF WEED, I CAN TELL YOU THAT, IN THE SHORT TERM, IT CAN BE LIFE-CHANGING.

IT'S GIVEN MY SISTER-IN-LAW RELIEF FROM THE PHYSICAL PAIN AND ANXIETY THAT SHE'S LEARNING, EVERY DAY, TO LIVE WITH.

AND IT'S GIVEN THE REST OF US OUR BEKAH BACK.

NEWS

Wake and bake

A morning at the CBD shop

By MAYA DUKMASOVA



Hemp flower, which is rich in CBD, looks, smells, and smokes just like marijuana—but it won't get you high.

© MAYA DUKMASOVA

It's 8 AM on a Friday in Boystown and 26-year-old Danielle Larsen unlocks the door of the CBD Kratom shop. She has long black hair and wears black Converse sneakers, high-waisted jeans, and a green short-sleeved polo with the shop's logo stitched on the front. The corner storefront is drenched with sunlight, filled with the not-too-loud pulsation of a Muse song, and ready to receive its first customer.

CBD, or cannabidiol, is a compound extracted from hemp. Hemp—unlike marijuana—is a cannabis-family plant that is legal in all 50 states and won't get you high because it contains very low levels of the psychoactive compound THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). CBD, which has been credited with everything from soothing anxiety to abating seizures, can be extracted from marijuana plants, too (though the products sold at CBD Kratom are made with CBD derived only from hemp plants). Industrial production of hemp in Illinois is still in its infancy. So for now, CBD Kratom imports most of their CBD products from Colorado.

Kratom (pronounced KRAY-tum) refers to the powdered leaves of the *Mitragyna speciosa* tree, which is native to southeast Asia and produces an opioid compound that can be mildly psychoactive—lower doses can produce stimulating feelings akin to coffee, higher ones can produce feelings of euphoria or relaxation. (Opioids are any natural or synthetic substances that act on the brain's opioid receptors, like OxyContin, methadone, or opium poppy derivatives like heroin and morphine.) Kratom is much less researched than CBD. It's raised concerns for its addictive potential and has been tenuously linked to a few dozen overdose deaths around the country. The FDA has banned imports of kratom from some

manufacturers and distributors and there have been reports of the powder being sold with adulterants ranging from sawdust to PCP. CBD Kratom swears by the purity and safety of its kratom supply, which comes from a grower in Indonesia.

The Boystown shop is part of a Saint Louis-based chain with 18 locations around the country. The company was founded in 2016 by David Palatnik and his wife, Dafna Revah. Palatnik and his brother were already running a head-shop chain and he set out to retail CBD and kratom in a space designed to buck the negative stigma of a weed-adjacent business.

The shop is airy, with a wood-laminate floor and high ceiling. The interior design is generally inviting, if a bit reminiscent of an artsy teenage girl's room. There are quirky hand-painted signs ("You deserve to relax") and drawings of human anatomical systems on black chalkboard panels. Fake plants are interspersed with real ones. Tall glass display cases ring the perimeter of the floor where much of the CBD inventory is kept under lock and key—everything from \$2.95 lollipops infused with 10 mg of the compound to \$59.95 "shatters," crumbly substances with up to 1,000 mg of CBD per gram. There are vials of CBD drops to be administered under the tongue, topical creams and lip balms infused with CBD, bath bombs, chocolate, honey, and even dog treats, which are especially popular around the Fourth of July to ease the stress of fireworks for furry friends.

Shea Petersen, a 24-year-old aspiring actor who works at the shop because his other passion is homeopathic and natural medicine, says CBD drops help tremendously with his scoliosis and fibromyalgia. When he's in a play he usually downs a couple of the shop's

CBD-infused carbonated waters backstage to stay relaxed.

The first customer, a petite and tan middle-aged blond woman in black leggings, bronze sneakers, and aviator sunglasses, strides in at 8:15. She's a regular who asks for two strains of kratom powder from a wall of small wooden crates behind the counter. "People will get it to replace coffee," Larsen tells me later. The shop classifies kratom types as reds (euphoria), greens (energy), and whites (relaxation). One customer might turn to a strain of powder for pain relief while another uses it for restful sleep. Others don't respond to kratom at all.

Mornings are for kratom customers. They stream in at a steady clip—a rotund, bearded young man in a bright blue "Suck it Trebek" T-shirt; a woman in high-end athletic gear with an infant on her hip; a trim, bespectacled middle-aged man in jeans and an ultralight down jacket. The CBD folks usually flow in later, Larsen says. In the five hours I spent at the shop, 27 customers came in, about half looking for CBD and the other half for kratom. Twenty-two of the customers that day were white, and 15 of them were white men. One man in a camouflage cap with the U.S. Air Force logo came in for several kratom capsule packets. He's a regular who uses kratom to manage pain and avoid prescription opioids and travels from Wisconsin, where kratom is banned, Petersen explains.

One of the glass cases along the wall draws particular attention from customers—the top shelves are lined with small bottles of tinctures, the bottom ones with glass jars of dried hemp flower buds and pre-rolled joints. Hemp flowers look and smell just like weed buds and can be smoked the same as their psychoactive cousin. The shop sells vapes and hemp oil car-

tridges for e-cigarettes, too. Larsen says she recommends going straight home after buying hemp buds, lest a police officer stops you and thinks it's marijuana.

"Cops will come in and you can tell they're just looking for something illegal to happen," Petersen says. They always eye the dried flower with suspicion, but he adds that some officers are customers who bring colleagues to the shop in an attempt to educate them about CBD. Also uneducated? Reporters. A while back, they recalled, K2 (aka spice, aka spike, aka synthetic marijuana) was in the news.

"We had people from the *Tribune* coming in here," Larsen says. "It was like this older man with white hair and I think he was wearing khakis and he was saying 'Say, you got any spice?'" she puts on a hokey voice. "And we're like 'No, it's not legal.' Plus I feel like [selling it would] be super straying away from our theme here." That theme being health and wellness, she implied—not psychosis.

Since CBD and kratom aren't regulated, there's no systematic quality control over the products sold in retail stores. Customers have little assurance beyond their own googling, manufacturers' labels, and the words of the shopkeepers. Larsen and Petersen seem to take their responsibility to inform and warn customers of their products' effects seriously. They have lengthy conversations with visitors and aren't pushy with sales pitches.

"People come to us and talk about everything they're dealing with and so we're like stand-in therapists," Larsen says. "We don't give any medical advice but I feel like people just want to be heard. Most people who come in will be dealing with a lot of anxiety or some other issues where they want to take CBD as an extra helper."

As the morning wound down and the clerks had takeout from the nearby Chicago Diner, I bought and ate a caramel infused with 30 mg of CBD. It had a satisfying balance of sugar and a soft, chewy consistency. About an hour later, I felt good. Maybe it was my brain awash in CBD. Or perhaps just the normal relaxation brought by the tide of an impending weekend. 🍪

🐦 @mdoukmas



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Weed whacked

If recreational cannabis is legalized, how will Illinois reengage the formerly incarcerated and make amends to communities of color?

By **TATIANA WALK-MORRIS**

If Illinois legalizes recreational cannabis, David Tello plans to come home. Until he decides whether to return to his wife and two children in Peoria, Illinois, in May, he's staying in California, where he's helping his brother relaunch their cannabis company in that state's new recreational market. If recreational cannabis becomes legal here, Tello will launch MelloVibes, a cannabis dispensary, in Peoria. But for now, he's legally blocked from the industry he knows best because of a previous conviction that he later got sealed.

Tello, who is first-generation Italian-American, is one of countless cannabis-connected felons in Illinois whose future prospects in the budding industry are unclear. As the state weighs recreational cannabis legalization—and eyes how other states have rolled out regulations—activists and citizens are wondering how Illinois will handle two pressing, overlapping concerns: how to engage felons with industry expertise like Tello and how to rectify the impact of cannabis criminalization on communities of color that have been disproportionately affected by the war on drugs.

City and state officials have made efforts to ease the penalties for cannabis possession and convictions, but it's unclear how much of the resources generated by cannabis legalization will be allotted to communities that have been the hardest hit and whether recreational legalization will actually benefit them.

When Illinois opened its medicinal market, Tello didn't apply to participate, because the program isn't open to individuals with felony convictions. Tello has worked within the cannabis sector for years. In 2005, the Baltimore native moved to California with his brother and the two started their own medical cannabis farm. And once Colorado legalized recreational cannabis, his brother started another cannabis cultivation facility there in 2016, but Tello couldn't be involved in the Colorado business due to a 2009 cannabis conviction in Illinois for which he was sentenced to five years in prison. He served 27 months before being sent to a work-release program in Peoria.

The time behind bars made him more patient, but it was hard to be away from his children, who are now in or headed to college.

"The worst, for me, in prison was not being able to hold my children. I love my kids, my wife. I just really missed my family more than anything," Tello said. "I remember from a prison phone, my daughter being 12 or 13 asking me, 'Daddy, is it okay if I have a boyfriend?' That's a very hard feeling to get over."

He declined to name his former employer in the work-release program, but said he was in automotive sales alongside two other individuals with criminal records.

Massachusetts, and California cities like Long Beach and Oakland, have established cannabis social equity programs, which help individuals and communities impacted by cannabis criminalization get spots within business incubators, find jobs, and obtain licensing. It's unclear whether Illinois will follow suit. When the state started its pilot medicinal cannabis program, regulators authorized cultivation centers and dispensaries to grow and sell medicinal cannabis for pain associated with conditions such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, and HIV and AIDS. But thanks to the Compassionate Use of Medical Cannabis Pilot Program Act, which conceals the contents of dispensary and cultivation center applications and renewals, it's unclear just how many people who received licenses were members of underrepresented or marginalized communities, including women,

people of color, veterans, or individuals with disabilities. The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation and Illinois Department of Agriculture denied Freedom of Information Act requests for access to that data, but that review is pending.

Between 2005 and 2017, the number of individuals in Illinois prisons for cannabis convictions peaked in 2011 at 849, but has since been on the decline, dropping to 372 in 2017, according to Illinois Department of Corrections statistics.

Cook County state's attorney Kim Foxx announced in January that her office would begin expunging misdemeanor cannabis convictions. State Representative La Shawn Ford introduced the Criminal Identification bill, which would seal nonviolent criminal records including possession of 10 grams or less of cannabis after ten years. Other states have made an effort to expunge cannabis convictions, but it's important for Illinois to automate or simplify that process as much as possible, said State Representative Kelly Cassidy (14th), who has been working with State Senator Heather Steans (7th) to craft recreational cannabis legislation. Cassidy said Illinois should also improve the entrepreneurship support and law enforcement components.

"I think what most folks fail to recognize when contemplating those issues of equity and access is that there's not a singular problem that's caused that lack of diversity," Cassidy said.

States have used different metrics such as school or arrest data to identify communities affected by cannabis criminalization. After talking with minority caucuses, and other stakeholders, Cassidy decided that the state needs to create a program for communities to decide how to use the resources generated by cannabis legalization.

As for diversifying entrepreneurship within the market, Cassidy acknowledged that—though the state has declined to disclose which diverse entrepreneurs were kept out of the sector—Illinois's current medical market is overwhelmingly white and male, adding that dispensaries could be more inclusive in the hiring process. She also said the medical cannabis law's language that prevents the state from giving out not only proprietary business information, but also disclosing basic ownership information about the companies licensed to operate, was a drafting error.

"It is critically important that we address the issue of equity and access and bring ➔

continued from 15

real competition into the industry and ensure that we do that in a way that improves the abysmal diversity record not just in terms of ownership but in hiring and contracting as well,” Cassidy said. “They can be doing better now, and they’re not.”

Activists, especially advocates of color, are eyeing the legislation to make sure the recreational legalization doesn’t repeat the same mistakes as the medicinal one. Echoing Cassidy’s hope for Illinois, Kiana Hughes, education director of Chicago NORML, a cannabis policy, education, and entrepreneurship advocacy group, said Illinois has a chance to legalize cannabis while implementing social equity measures.

The organization has put forth its proposals for social equity in cannabis, which include expunging cannabis conviction records and providing resources for entrepreneurs, whether or not they want to enter the cannabis industry. For people of color whose communities have been disproportionately impacted by the war on drugs, it is especially crucial that the state devote social equity resources specifically to them, because cannabis criminalization was partially responsible for trauma and family separations—a separate plight than other marginalized groups have faced, Hughes added.

“I think that the stuff provided for people of color and social equity should be separate. I don’t want us all to get lumped in with women and veterans and all that,” Hughes said. “Do what you need to do to make sure women get what they need and make sure that they’re paid the same, but don’t mash that up with what we’re asking for over here because we’re asking for it for a very specific reason.”

A February 2019 report from the consulting firm Freedman & Koski estimated that legalizing cannabis in Illinois could generate between \$443 million and \$676 million a year in sales tax revenue. But if the state were to legalize cannabis, the market would need to open up to more cultivators and dispensaries. A 2019 Marijuana Policy Group analysis reportedly found that the current market could fulfill the state’s demand for four years, but Cassidy said just because the current suppliers and dispensaries claimed they could meet the demand doesn’t mean that the market shouldn’t be opened to other entrepreneurs.

In its conversations with legislators, Chicago NORML has heard a willingness to pass

a recreational cannabis bill, but there are still plenty of kinks to be worked out. Hughes called the measure “inevitable” but said the group wants to slow down the process to make sure the state perfects its social equity effort. Legislators still have some reservations, for example, about social consumption, which Hughes said stems from the “demonization of cannabis.” And there’s the question of how to determine when people are driving while high. Unlike with drunk driving, there’s no field test to immediately determine whether someone behind the wheel is impaired.

These law enforcement concerns are important, because there is mistrust within the Black community, Hughes said. Removing smell as a probable cause for arrest is critical for ensuring cannabis consumers don’t get arrested on questionable grounds, she said.

The fear in Black communities exists even in pro-cannabis circles. Hughes said that when she’s organizing Chicago NORML events, people fear being targeted by the police or being seen by outsiders as a cannabis supporter. Police officers’ views of cannabis won’t change simply with the passage of a new law, nor can you wait for law enforcement to change their minds before changing the law, said Sharone Mitchell Jr., deputy director of the Illinois Justice Project.

On the other side of the issue, some activists worry that cannabis will not be good for the Black community. Will Jones, communications and outreach associate of Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM), a bipartisan marijuana policy organization, questions whether the resources generated from legalized cannabis in Illinois would actually benefit any communities of color.

Allowing entrepreneurs of color to enter the sector could be good in theory, but it takes significant capital to even enter the industry, and it’s not clear whether their earnings will “trickle down” to other people of color, Jones said. The organization is working to further decriminalize personal cannabis possession in Illinois, but it views the commercialization of cannabis as a way for companies to target disenfranchised communities, likening the budding sector to alcohol and tobacco companies, Jones said.

“If we want to show that we have the political will to really channel more resources to disenfranchised communities, let’s effectively decriminalize,” Jones said. “Take it out of the hands of law enforcement, so there aren’t people arrested and getting incarcerated from

that. That will have huge savings for the state.”

Mitchell, a former trial attorney at the Cook County public defender’s office, said legalizing recreational cannabis could reduce the court’s number of misdemeanor cases but wouldn’t do much for decreasing the prison population, because the majority of people in prison are incarcerated for non-cannabis-related offenses. According to Illinois Department of Corrections statistics, the percentage of state prisoners with cannabis convictions has not risen above 2 percent between 2005 and 2017.

In a larger sense, societal attitudes toward cannabis have progressed a great deal since 2009, Tello said. A 2017 Southern Illinois University poll found that 74 percent of voters support decriminalization of cannabis where people in possession of small amounts for personal consumption would not be prosecuted but may be fined, compared to 21 percent who strongly oppose it.

“I never got mad at marijuana. I got mad at the system and the crazy irrational thinking of society,” he said, reflecting on his sentence.

When it comes to compensating individuals who were incarcerated for cannabis convictions, Mitchell thinks doing so would be equitable, but a measure like that wouldn’t gain political support or be economically possible for the state to do.

Teresa Haley, president of the Illinois NAACP, also expressed skepticism over whether cannabis legalization would benefit Black communities, adding that she was concerned about children accessing it, as well as adult addiction. Even if the state were to expunge previous cannabis convictions, Illinois would need to ensure that those whose prior cannabis convictions were thrown out have the resources to reintegrate into the community, she said.

For communities slated to receive a cut of the cannabis tax revenue, Haley said that it’s up to lawmakers to commit to a percentage, whether it’s 20 or 25 percent or so. When asked whether she believes that lawmakers will actually allocate a significant portion of tax revenue from cannabis legalization to communities of color, Haley said, “Hell no.”

“I think we need to be at the table, but if you’re introducing . . . legislation that’s going to cause more harm than health to our communities, you need to have some programs in place and some dollars to back it up,” Haley said.

Even among Black entrepreneurs who wanted to enter Illinois’s medical cannabis market,

the financial hurdles were too high, particularly in terms of buying land for cannabis cultivation in southern Illinois or enduring the process of credit checks and background checks before opening a dispensary, Haley said. When asked if she knows any entrepreneurs of color who would talk to the *Reader* for this article, she said she knew of professional people who had tried to pool resources to enter the industry but who felt that talking about their efforts publicly would jeopardize their careers.

In response to critics who say that legalization would bring more cannabis into communities of color, Hughes said that the controlled substance already permeates Black and brown neighborhoods unregulated and is readily available for young people in the underground market.

“Most of the time what people don’t understand is when you get something from a dispensary or from a regulated cannabis business, it’s been tested. There’s labels of exactly what’s in it. You can look it up,” she said. “But with what’s out there on the street now, you’re really just taking someone else’s uninformed information that they’re just throwing out there.”

While legislators decide whether they will legalize cannabis in Illinois, entrepreneurs like Tello must wait to determine how they will operate in the state in the future. Tello said he knew from an early age that he wanted to be a businessman. His father, who died when Tello was four years old, owned commercial fishing boats in Boston. “I had this feeling growing up that I’ve always wanted to own my own business, and I’ve owned different businesses throughout my life, some successful, some failures,” he said.

As he awaits lawmakers’ decision, he said he hopes that the bill they pass will allow those with cannabis convictions to participate in the legal market as well as provide social equity programs that will even the playing field. Doing so would allow those who have some experience with the plant to get their shot at the legal market, rather than only ushering in wealthy people with little experience who will end up hiring consultants for advice.

“I’m not necessarily looking for easy. I’m just looking for the opportunity,” Tello said. “I work my ass off to get where I need to go. I don’t need easy. But I do need to know that I’m allowed in the program.” 

 @Tati_WM

3 FACES ★★★

Directed by Jafar Panahi. In subtitled Farsi and Turkish. 100 min. 4/19-4/25.
Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State, 312-846-2800, siskelfilmcenter.org, \$12.

FILM



3 Faces

REVIEW

Mirror, mirror

In *3 Faces*, Iranian director Jafar Panahi turns the camera inward.

By **BEN SACHS**

Had Jafar Panahi not already used the title *The Mirror* in 1997, he could have applied it to any of the four features he's made this decade. The Iranian director appears as himself in all four—*This Is Not a Film* (2011), *Closed Curtain* (2013), *Taxi* (2015), and now *3 Faces* (2018)—effectively turning the camera on himself as a sort-of mirror. It would be shortsighted, though, to reduce these works with the label of autobiography. For one thing Panahi is too imaginative an artist to limit his interests to just himself. Like the French filmmakers Jean-Luc Godard and Philippe Garrel, Panahi recognizes how cinema can both enlarge a director's persona and hold it up for scrutiny—you could say he brings the camera to himself in order to interrogate how it works. In *The Mirror*, Panahi exposed how much he usually controls as a director by allowing the little girl who stars in the movie to take control of the narrative. His films of the 2010s follow a similar trajectory, questioning how much artists can control the world around them.

This question, of course, is not just metaphysical for Panahi. The director has been banned from making movies in Iran since 2010, and unless that ban is revoked it will stay in effect until 2030. The Iranian government has also forbidden Panahi from leaving the country, making it impossible for him to work abroad. So I'm not surprised that numerous people writing about Panahi's recent films have overlooked their metaphysical and formal aspects by concentrating on the fact that they've been made at all. The stories of Panahi's efforts to get his movies made and seen are indeed entertaining, even heroic (*This Is Not a Film* was famously smuggled out of Iran on a flash drive hidden inside a cake), but let's not praise them simply because they exist. *Taxi* is on one level about Panahi's experience as the victim of a restrictive government, but what makes it a great movie is how the director is able to see in his plight a connection to people who are suffering under the Iranian regime for any reason. It's a film about how cinema unites people, not to mention a funny, perceptive

depiction of what it's like to drive other people around all day.

3 Faces is no less perceptive, delivering a richly detailed account of life in a rural Iranian village. Panahi characterizes the community of Saran (located in northeastern Iran near Tabriz) through its geography, customs, and manner of social interaction. Even though the Tehran-based filmmaker acknowledges he's observing this community as an outsider, his curiosity is irrepressible and contagious. It's also the driving force of the film's narrative.

3 Faces begins as the director and actress Behnaz Jafari (also playing herself) embark on the long drive to Saran after a young woman who lives there sends a video to Panahi's cell phone begging for Jafari's help. In the video the young woman, Marziyeh, explains she's been accepted into a fine-arts school in Tehran to study acting, but her parents, who don't want anyone in their family becoming artists, have forbidden her from leaving the village. The despairing Marziyeh concludes the video by putting a noose around her neck, then dropping her phone. Was she committing suicide or merely threatening it? Feeling a sense of responsibility for another persecuted artist, Panahi decides to look for her in Saran and offer moral support if she's still alive.

Jafari suspects that Marziyeh was only playing her suicide attempt, but the director isn't so sure. He insists that the video couldn't have been doctored, and in any case, he can't resist her cry for help. The opening 20 minutes of *3 Faces* find Panahi and Jafari bickering over the verisimilitude of the video on their drive, which gets interrupted by phone calls from Panahi's mother (who wants to know if he's making another movie) and the director of the film Jafari has walked off of in order to make the journey. When the two arrive in Saran, they're full of questions, but they're unable to ask them because they're instantly swept up into the life of the village. They interrupt a wedding ceremony taking place on the only road leading into the town; in the village center, they're mistaken for government workers, whom the residents are waiting on to fix the broken water and gas lines. Over the next day, Panahi and Jafari interact with a variety of townspeople, who begin to treat the visitors with respect after they realize the two are famous artists.

As the protagonists get sidetracked from their mission by their meetings with the vil-

lagers, it becomes clear that *3 Faces* isn't so much about whether Panahi and Jafari will find Marziyeh than it is about the pleasure of interacting with people unlike yourself and how being a famous artist can make such interactions possible. The film develops a grand irony in presenting the difference between how the villagers regard the visiting artists and how they regard Marziyeh, whose dream of becoming a film actress they view with contempt. When Panahi and Jafari aren't talking about the troubled young woman, they find the people of Saran exceedingly gracious. The film's amusing climax finds an elderly local trying to pass off to the bewildered Jafari a package containing his son's foreskin, believing it will give her and Panahi good luck. The director could certainly use it (the luck, that is). Panahi never mentions his ban from filmmaking in *3 Faces*, yet this reality governs the movie as a structuring absence. Given how much he's suffered as a film artist, can one really blame the villagers for not wanting Marziyeh to enter the Iranian film industry?

Another irony of *3 Faces* is that Panahi can't escape the movies even when he's not allowed to make them. Early on in the film, Jafari reminds the director of a screenplay he wrote about suicide several years earlier, raising the possibility that he's now living inside the film he was unable to shoot. Other scenes involving Marziyeh's angry younger brother, who flies into a rage whenever he hears about his sister's acting dreams, feel like they could have come from Panahi's *The Circle* (2000) and *Offside* (2006), both of which concerned the daily persecution women face in Iran. The film's depiction of cinema as a hall of mirrors recalls Abbas Kiarostami's head-spinning masterpiece *Through the Olive Trees* (1994), on which Panahi worked as assistant director, and the similarity is likely intentional. *3 Faces* is the first feature Panahi has made since Kiarostami's death in 2016, and it evokes the work of his old boss in other respects: the premise of a director driving to a rural village to track down someone who may be dead recalls Kiarostami's *Life, and Nothing More . . .* (1992), and the theme of suicide recalls his *Taste of Cherry* (1997). This is another example of how Panahi, under the guise of looking inward, is really using cinema to celebrate his connection to others. **■**

@1bsachs

★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ AVERAGE ★ POOR ● WORTHLESS



Killing Gaza

FESTIVAL PREVIEW

The people behind the headlines

The Chicago Palestine Film Festival provides a framework for understanding recent events in the Middle East.

By KATHLEEN SACHS

Last Wednesday Benjamin Netanyahu was reelected as Israel's prime minister, set to serve an unprecedented fifth term. Leading up to his victory, Netanyahu promised to annex Israeli settlements in the West Bank, diminishing hope even further for the future of a Palestinian state. Our country's mainstream news media—which, like many of those in power, favor an Israeli perspective—play down Netanyahu's transgressions, thus depriving many Americans the chance to see their impact on the Palestinian people. When viewed in total, the eight features and ten short films in the 18th annual Chicago Palestine Film Festival provide a necessary framework for understanding dire recent events. The selections comprise an exhaustive, and often emotionally exhausting, look at Palestinian life, both historical and contemporary.

Six of the eight features are documentaries, which seems appropriate to the festival's mission per its website: “to present a film festival that is open, critical, and reflective of the

culture, experience, and vision of the artists.” This is an objective that comes through in the documentaries especially.

Two slant purely informative: Max Blumenthal and Dan Cohen's *Killing Gaza* and Rifat Audeh's *The Truth: Lost at Sea* provide informative, if not graphic, overviews of their respective topics. Independent journalists Blumenthal and Cohen document the events and aftermath of the 2014 Israel-Gaza conflict, during which Israel launched a 51-day assault against the Gaza Strip that claimed the lives of more than 2,000 Palestinians and destroyed almost 20,000 housing units.

Audeh's *The Truth: Lost at Sea* is straightforward but needs not overemphasize to astound. Audeh was a participant in the 2010 Freedom Flotilla, a convoy of six civilian ships that attempted to provide aid to Gaza in spite of the Israeli blockade. Israeli forces attacked in the night, traversing international waters to harangue activists and aid workers aboard the ships. Using footage shot by himself and others on the flotilla, Audeh utilizes film as a

primary source to refute Israel's claim that the attack was justified.

Three of the documentaries center around Palestinian women to joyous and heartbreaking effect. Thomas A. Morgan's *Soufra* follows Mariam Shaar, a Palestinian woman born and raised in Beirut's Burj El Barajneh refugee camp, as she rallies other women in the camp to start a catering business that soon evolves into other, larger endeavors. The footage of the food is positively mouthwatering, a salient reminder of its ability to unite people within a culture as well as outside it. The group, called Soufra, put out a cookbook, with proceeds benefiting its ongoing efforts.

Christy Garland's *What Walaa Wants* follows another refugee, this time inside a West Bank camp called Balata, as she pursues her dream of becoming a member of the Palestinian Security Forces. Teenaged Walaa is decidedly headstrong, and her desire to be an authority figure while rejecting authority herself makes for a curious story. It's a nuanced look at what it means to be young in Palestine, one that reveals how certain truths (namely that of youthful rebellion) are universal.

The closing night film, Julia Bacha's *Naila and the Uprising*, deals with another sort of rebellion, this one more central to the ongoing conflict. Partly animated, the film details the courageous story of Naila Ayeshe, a Palestinian woman whose participation in the First Intifada begets even more stories of the important role women played in that insurrection, women who were ultimately forced to return to being second-class citizens after serving the cause. The animation is novel, but it's the interviews with Palestinian women that stand out.

Narrated by Iggy Pop, Marco Proserpio's *The Man Who Stole Banksy* is a meditation on street art vis-à-vis the elusive artist's 2014 trip to Bethlehem with a smattering of other street artists. Among their pieces was a painting by Banksy that depicted an Israeli guard checking a donkey's identification papers, rendered in his signature silhouette style. Intended to be a commentary on the undue diligence with which Israeli forces police the occupied area, some Palestinians nevertheless found it to be offensive, thinking that Banksy was comparing them to the oft-maligned animal. The film evolves into a rumination on who owns street art and, correspondingly, who can sell it. Its message is somewhat unclear, but the pairing of a seemingly trivial issue against a much more significant one—living in a place where one's citizenship is constantly scrutinized by occupying forces—illuminates both concerns.

Perseverance under duress is a consistent theme among all the films; the lone live-action narrative feature, Bassam Jarbawi's *Screwdriver (Mafak)* considers the plight of a man wrongfully detained in an Israeli prison for more than 15 years owing to deception centered around a youthful indiscretion. Like several of the other selections, it positions such harrowing circumstances in the context of a less politically charged genre; in this case, the plot involves something of a love triangle.

Accompanying all the features is a bevy of short films whose genres range the gamut. It's in the shorts where narrative fiction dominates, with an emphasis on the day-to-day happenings that make life as a Palestinian seem both wonderful and challenging. Here, too, works centering on women stand out. Laila Abbas's *The Chair* is impressive in all respects, from its pacing to its wry economy, as it depicts a Palestinian family in the wake of a family death, with a friend attempting to play matchmaker to both the young Jamaica-based niece and her never-married aunt. Something that links many of the short films is the way in which their makers draw emotions other than horror out of otherwise-appalling scenarios. Take, for instance, Rakan Mayas's *Bonboné*, a film that could legitimately be termed sexy even if its plot deals with a Palestinian husband, who has been imprisoned by the Israelis for unknown reasons, and wife trying to conceive across prison bars.

Laymun by Catherine Prowse and Hannah Quinn is another exceptional short. Beautifully animated, it shows a young woman tending a lemon grove amidst an unidentified Middle Eastern war zone. Mats Grorud's animated feature *The Tower* follows its young protagonist, Wardi, as she attempts to salvage hope for her great-grandfather by speaking with her relatives about their family's history. The film spans the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict dating back to al-Nakba (or just “the Nakba”) in 1948, when more than 700,000 Palestinians were removed from their homeland. Its animation, a mix of different styles, is breathtaking, the labor an appropriate homage to the struggles it depicts. Though both these films are feats of craft, neither oversentimentalizes its subjects; larger violence and the smaller unglamorous parts of daily life are animated with equally impressive honesty. That's a dichotomy that could be said to describe the festival as a whole—audiences of all backgrounds should come away with greater insight into the complexities of Palestinian life. **R**

FILM



Little

NOW PLAYING

Babylon

A new restoration of this 1980 British cult classic makes plain that its themes of disaffection and racial discord in south London are still relevant nearly four decades later. Through the perspective of a DJ for a local reggae crew (Brinsley Forde), the city's heated Jamaican subculture unfurls. It's an intricate network, influenced by poverty and intraracial rivalry as much as anti-Black racism and police misconduct. The drama is notable for its cast of mostly young Black musicians and its refusal to shy away from troublesome territory. The movie also features a wellspring of talent behind the camera, from late director Franco Rosso to cinematographer Chris Menges (who went on to win an Oscar for *The Killing Fields*) to reggae producer Dennis Bovell, who supplies the film's propulsive score. In English and Jamaican patois with subtitles. —**LEAH PICKETT** 95 min. Fri 4/19, 4 and 8 PM; Sat 4/20, 5:30 PM; Sun 4/21, 3 PM; Mon 4/22, 6 PM; Wed 4/24, 8 PM; and Thu 4/25, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR The Big Sleep

A very good movie (1946), and by far the best Raymond Chandler adaptation, but it isn't one of Howard Hawks's most refined efforts—it lacks his clarity of line, his balance, his sense of a free spirit at play within a carefully set structure. What you remember here are moments: Bogart's line about Martha Vickers ("Ain't she been weaned yet?"), Dorothy Malone in the bookshop, the broken roll of quarters pouring from a hood's fist, Bogart and Bacall's racetrack dialogue, the romance that is charted in the borrowing, lighting, and puffing of cigarettes. If you can figure out who killed the chauffeur, the world is waiting for the answer. With John Ridgely, Regis Toomey, and Elisha Cook Jr.; from a script by William Faulkner, Leigh Brackett, and Jules Furthman. —**DAVE KEHR** 114 min. 35mm. Sat 4/20-Sun 4/21, 11:30 AM. Music Box

Le boucher

One of the best of Claude Chabrol's attempts to recapture the effects of a Hitchcock thriller in an anti-theatrical context of naturalistic performances and closely observed social detail (1970). Jean Yanne is the village butcher with a sinister secret, and Stéphane Audran is the schoolteacher who loves him. In French with subtitles. —**DAVE KEHR** 95 min. 16mm. Mon 4/22, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

RR Capernaum

Shot over six months, *Capernaum* is documentary in feel, based on years of research and interviews director Nadine Labaki and her collaborators conducted with refugees and neglected, abandoned, and/or incarcerated minors. It offers an immediacy and authenticity that would not have been possible without its nonprofessional performers improvising versions of their own experiences. In this story of an abused street child who sues his monstrous parents for bringing him into the world, no one is more compelling than Zain Al Rafeea, the youngster who plays the protagonist (also named Zain), a real-life refugee from Syria's civil war who was only 12 years old and barely literate when the director met him. He is also small for his age, a result of malnutrition; with haunted eyes and a stunted frame, he's every inch the heartbreaking urchin. In Arabic with subtitles. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** R, 121 min. Sat 4/20, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 4/21, 4 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Devi

One of Satyajit Ray's greatest early films (1960), full of sensuality and ironic undertones, *Devi* is sufficiently critical of Hindu superstition that it was banned from foreign distribution until Nehru interceded. The plot concerns a wealthy and devout landowner in the 19th century who believes his daughter-in-law (Sharmila Tagore) is the reincarnation of the goddess Kali and convinces her that he's right. With Soumitra Chatterji and Chhabi Biswas. In Bengali with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 93 min. 35mm archival print. Wed 4/24, 7 and 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Duel in the Sun

A big, big western (1946) from producer David O. Selznick, with Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotten, Lionel Barrymore, Gregory Peck, Lillian Gish, Herbert Marshall, Walter Huston, Harry Carey, and Butterfly McQueen. Selznick enlisted King Vidor—one of the few directors with the logistical know-how to handle such a sprawling film—and tried to duplicate the success of his *Gone With the Wind*. What Selznick got instead was a screaming Freudian fantasy, full of the dark sexuality characteristic of Vidor's late career (*Beyond the Forest*, *Ruby Gentry*). Contemporary wits called it *Lust in the Dust*, and there's no doubt that it goes too far in almost every direction—but that touch of obsession is exactly what saves it. —**DAVE KEHR** 129 min. 35mm archival print. Fri 4/19, 7 PM, and Sun 4/21, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

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Easter Parade

A modest, slightly lumpy, but effective MGM musical (1948) by the studio's least obtrusive talent, Charles Walters. Fred Astaire is a dancer whose partner (Ann Miller) is getting too big for her tap shoes; he grooms Judy Garland as a replacement. The Irving Berlin score is bright, and Walters is one director who knows when to leave Astaire to his own devices. —**DAVE KEHR** 107 min. 35mm. Sun 4/21, 7 PM. Music Box

Fantastic Planet

A 1973 Czech animated feature, directed by a Frenchman (Rene Laloux) and scripted by a Pole (Roland Topor). It tells of a race of 39-foot-tall giants with red eyes—called Draags—and their eventual war and conciliation with a subjugated race: tiny humanlike pets of the Draags, called Oms. Obviously intended as a parable (the Draags have reached the pinnacle of scientific knowledge, knowledge that several rebellious Oms put to their own use), the film has a flat quality that cannot entirely be overcome by the sensational animation and the obvious good intentions of its creators. In French with subtitles. —**DON DRUKER** 72 min. 35mm. Fri 4/19, 4 and 8 PM; and Mon, 4/22, 6:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

For All Mankind

Al Reinert made this 1989 film about the Apollo moon missions by sifting through thousands of hours of NASA footage and recording almost 80 hours of interviews with the astronauts, then conflating multiple missions into a single trip. The astronauts playfully mug for the camera, and the footage is spectacular, from a fiery lift-off montage to familiar but lovely shots of the earth from space to the moon's mysterious gray surface. But it's telling that a description of the problems of defecating in zero gravity is more interesting than astronauts' trite musings on "out of this world" views, and the ahistorical editing is occasionally irritating. —**FRED CAMPER** 79 min. Fri 4/19, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art [FREE](#)

A Hard Day's Night

In the Beatles' 1964 screen debut the four lovable adenoidal lads day-trip through a press party, a televised concert, and a helicopter ride to Wolverhampton. American-born director Richard Lester serves up a helping of what, on this side of the pond, we came to think of as kicky, mod British filmmaking. —**DON DRUKER** 85 min. Thu 4/25, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Her Smell

There have been plenty of movies about self-destructive rock musicians, but none quite like this. Writer-director Alex Ross Perry isn't that interested in the creative process or the workings of the music industry—his film is a study in power dynamics at the microlevel, scrutinizing the ways that a drug-addicted bandleader (Elisabeth Moss in a commanding performance) manipulates the people closest to her and strategically avoids reckoning with her own bad behavior. This features Perry's best, most distinctive dialogue to date: rich in wordplay, proclamations, and metered speech, it suggests the influence of nothing less than Shakespearean drama. Remarkably this doesn't come off as mannered, since Perry grounds the action in an acute feeling for living in the present moment. Sean Price Williams's camera is frequently in motion, and conflicts are always bubbling up at the periphery

of the frame. Audaciously structured, the film runs 135 minutes and consists of just five scenes, with each one depicting a different stage of the heroine's downfall and eventual rebirth. Perry uses extended duration to make viewers feel trapped with the characters and long for them to see beyond themselves. With Agyness Deyn, Dan Stevens, Cara Delevingne, and Eric Stoltz. —**BEN SACHS** *R*, 134 min. Ross attends the 8 PM Saturday and 1:45 PM Sunday screenings. At Music Box Theatre. Visit [musicboxtheatre.com](#) for showtimes.

RRN Hotel by the River

An aging poet, enjoying an extended stay at the title location, calls on his two grown sons to visit him after he has a premonition he's going to die; meanwhile, another guest at the hotel receives a visit from her best friend, who promises to help her get over a recent breakup with her married lover. Hong Sang-soo's second film of 2018 (after *Grass*) begins as one of the South Korean writer-director's calmest and loveliest works, as Hong relaxedly introduces the characters and observes them quietly passing time together, but there are hints of disquiet beneath the surface. Shooting handheld for the first time, Hong injects a sense of instability into the pleasant interactions, and the black-and-white cinematography (like that of his 2017 feature *The Day After*) conjures up an air of stinging loneliness. When the characters get drunk and confess their true feelings—as they inevitably do in Hong's films—you may not be surprised to learn how unhappy they are. In Korean with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** 96 min. Fri 4/19, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 4/20, 3:15 PM; Sun 4/21, 5 PM; Mon 4/22, 8 PM; Tue 4/23, 6 PM; Wed 4/24, 6 PM; and Thu 4/25, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Julie & Julia

Writer-director Nora Ephron combines two cooking memoirs, Julia Child's *My Life in France* and Julie Powell's *Julie and Julia*, stirring briskly to keep them from separating in the bowl. The main reason for seeing this is Meryl Streep's deft comic performance as the fluttery TV chef, shown here in the 1950s as she learns her craft and sets out to publish a cookbook of French cuisine for Americans. The other half of the story stars Amy Adams as Powell, who made a name for herself in 2002 with a yearlong project to prepare and blog about every recipe in Child's book. The parallels are interesting up to a point, but as Ephron cuts between the two women, Powell's self-pitying spats with her husband (Chris Messina) settle at the level of Ephron's crowd-pleasing rom-coms (*Sleepless in Seattle*, *You've Got Mail*) even as Child's loving marriage to U.S. diplomat Paul Child (Stanley Tucci) grows more rich and complex. One keeps waiting for the title characters' lives to intersect, but when they finally do—with a reporter asking Powell to comment on Child's disparaging remarks about her—Ephron scurries away from the moment and its implications. —**J.R. JONES** *PG-13*, 118 min. Wed 4/24, 7:30 PM. Beverly Arts Center

RRJuno

Jason Reitman follows his pitch-perfect satire *Thank You for Smoking* with another adventurous comedy (2007), though here the cleverness can be grating; the movie's real distinction lies in its complicated emotions. A pregnant 16-year-old (Ellen Page) agrees to give her child away to a prosperous couple (Jason Bateman and Jennifer Garner) but later discovers the impending adoption has become the fault line of their marriage. Screenwriter Diablo Cody saddles her teenage heroine with annoyingly glib dialogue, and Reitman hammers

it so hard you almost expect a laugh track. More impressive are the adult characters: Allison Janney and J.K. Simmons are ruefully funny as the girl's practical parents, and as the yearning adoptive mother, Garner proves that even a limited actress can really connect when given the right role. —**J.R. JONES** *PG-13*, 96 min. Fri 4/19–Mon 4/22, 11 PM. Logan

Life of Brian

Originally titled *Jesus Christ: Lust for Glory*, this Monty Python parody of the New Testament (1979) stars Graham Chapman as the title character, a nebbish who's acclaimed by the rabble as a messiah and put to death by the Romans. Some Python fans swear by this, but I've always considered it the group's nadir: with a few exceptions (Michael Palin's lisping Pilate, the cheery musical number during the crucifixion) it's silly but toothless, sidestepping its ostensible target in favor of academic riffs on Pharisaic hairsplitting and pre-Christian cultism. The group came roaring back four years later with the more aggressive and inspired *The Meaning of Life*. Terry Jones directed. —**J.R. JONES** *R*, 93 min. Thu 4/18, 7 PM. Century Centre

NLittle

The plot of Tina Gordon's *Little* is nothing new: it's a take on the body-swap comedies that flourished in the 1980s. Here, aggressive tech boss Jordan Sanders (Regina Hall) wakes up one day as her 13-year-old self (Marsai Martin). The solution is nothing new either: Jordan learns to be kind and accept her inner child and only then does she switch back to her adult self. What makes the film feel fresh, however, are the performances from Martin and Issa Rae, who plays Jordan's assistant. The two play off of each other excellently, and Rae is as charming as she is in everything else. Unfortunately, the script, which too often errs on the side of caution, needs more comedic moments that would allow the film to thrive. When the film is funny, it's hilarious, but the comedy is too spread out, and not even the central performances can save it. —**MARISSA DE LA CERDA** *PG-13*, 109 min. Block 37, Chatham, Ford City, 600 North Michigan, Roosevelt Collection

Major League

A baseball movie (1989) set in Cleveland, with Tom Berenger as a seasoned catcher, Charlie Sheen as a rookie pitcher, and Corbin Bernsen as a third baseman, written and directed by David Ward. The plot suggests an unacknowledged remake of *The Producers*: the Cleveland Indians are inherited by a former showgirl (Margaret Whitton) who wants to move the team to Miami, but can only do so legally if it plays so badly in Cleveland that attendance collapses. The motley, eccentric team that she picks eventually gets wind of her scheme, and guess what? Unfortunately, this has none of the cynicism, humor, or energy of *The Producers* (or of *Bull Durham*, for that matter); slick predictability is about all it has in mind, down to the last trite freeze-frame. —**READER STAFF** *R*, 107 min. Tue 4/23–Thu 4/25, 10:30 PM. Logan

NMine 9

Early in *Mine 9*, there's a scene in which a group of Appalachian miners takes a vote on whether they should continue working at a site that's at risk of a methane explosion. "Paycheck ain't going to mean shit if you die two miles in, Kenny," one declares. This scene serves to set up our conflict and introduce the ensemble cast, each character with a compelling enough background to pack an emotional punch once we see them cast this ominous vote. Eddie Mensor's film about nine miners

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who do indeed get trapped two miles underground is not the first to show the dangers that await men and women who go to work beneath the earth: the 2015 film *The 33* brought to theaters the true story of 33 Chilean miners who made international headlines when they became trapped underground. But *Mine 9* is grittier, with an eerie score that will make viewers wonder if they're watching a horror film. Unfortunately, the film begins to lose its once-solid footing in the third act, leading to a rushed and disappointing ending. —**NOËLLE D. LILLEY** 84 min. Mensor attends the 7 and 9 PM Friday and 3, 5, and 7 PM Saturday screenings. Facets Cinémathèque

RRThe Other Side of the Wind

Orson Welles shot this self-referential (and often satirical) drama between 1970 and 1976, but due to extenuating circumstances, was never able to complete it; only in 2017 did a team of filmmakers embark on assembling a feature from Welles's footage, proceeding according to the many notes he left behind. It's impossible to say whether the resulting product is what Welles would have created, but what exists certainly provides much food for thought. The story takes place over a 24-hour period during which a lauded, Hemingwayesque filmmaker (John Huston) celebrates his career, presents rushes of his new film, and fends off journalists, protégés, and various hangers-on. The rapid, dizzying montage—similar to that of Welles's *F for Fake* (1975)—is so overwhelming that you may have trouble keeping track of the numerous characters and highly personal themes, which range from artistic integrity to sexual anxiety to the differences between our public and private selves. Yet Welles's bitterness about Hollywood is unmistakable, as is his enthusiasm about the possibilities of filmmaking in the poststudio era. With Peter Bogdanovich and Oja Kodar (who cowrote the script). —**BEN SACHS** *R*, 122 min. 35mm. Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum lectures at the Tuesday screening. Sat 4/20, 3 PM, and Tue 4/23, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Shall We Dance?

Its paper-thin characters turned into caricatures by egregious hamming, this 1996 Japanese comedy-drama about shy ballroom dancers is sentimental goo and downright interminable. Clearly pitched to the *Strictly Ballroom* market, it's strident and glib enough to corner it. Good luck and all that, but count me out. Written and directed by Masayuki Suo. In Japanese with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** *PG-13*, 136 min. 35mm archival print. Sun 4/21, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

RRTaipei Story

A turning point in the history of Taiwanese cinema, Edward Yang's 1985 masterpiece suggests a rough parallel with Abbas Kiarostami's *Close-up* in relation to Iranian cinema by virtue of featuring the other key Taiwanese filmmaker, Hou Hsiao-hsien, in a leading role, much as Mohsen Makhmalbaf is featured in Kiarostami's film. Hou, who also collaborated on the script, plays an alienated businessman working for a textile manufacturer who was an ace baseball player in his youth; when his girlfriend (pop star Tsai Chin) loses her job at a computer firm, their relationship begins to crumble. But this couple's malaise is only part of a multifaceted sense of confusion and despair that affects three generations of Taipei residents during a period of economic boom, and Yang's mastery in weaving together all his characters and subplots against a glittering urban landscape anticipates the major themes of his subsequent works.

FILM

Essential viewing. In Min Nan, Mandarin, and Hokkien with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 110 min. *Thu 4/25, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR N Teen Spirit

The fathomless yearning of teenage girls often gets short shrift, especially when their desire intertwines with art. Thankfully, the writing-directing debut of actor Max Minghella validates one girl's passion for music as more than essential to her being: it is her lifeblood. A 17-year-old (Elle Fanning) who lives on the Isle of Wight with her Polish immigrant mother enters a British singing competition and quickly advances through the rounds. She meets an alcoholic ex-opera singer (Zlatko Burić) who becomes her manager, and they forge a bond that is improbably sweet. But more than the sterling performances and Fanning's clarion voice, it's the film's visual language that sticks. When the teen performs, there are no reaction shots. It's her world the viewer enters, and cinematographer Autumn Durald lenses it beautifully. Vivid colors and shimmering light communicate the singer's frissons and invite her audience to feel them, too. —**LEAH PICKETT** PG-13, 92 min. *At Century Centre. Visit landmarktheatres.com for showtimes.*

RR N Wild Nights with Emily

Most biopics are not known for humor, but comedy frequently prevails in this sparkling indie based on the life of Emily Dickinson. Adapted by writer-director Madeleine Olnek from her 1999 stage play and incorporating recent scholarship and scientific research that debunks the long-held image of Dickinson (Molly Shannon) as a shy, chaste recluse, the movie lampoons 19th-century American mores and skewers the self-important writers and editors who couldn't hold a candle to the Amherst poet they so smugly patronized. Far from being self-effacing, this Emily knows her worth and struggles to overcome discrimination against female authors; she also gives herself unreservedly—if by needs clandestinely—to the girlhood lover who later became her sister-in-law, Susan Gilbert Dickinson (Susan Ziegler). The supporting cast excels, with Amy Seimetz, Brett Gelman, Jackie Monahan, and Kevin Seal making the most of the well-tuned dialogue. But Dickinson's poems are hardly shortchanged: they appear throughout, inventively presented, revealing previously hidden facets of an extraordinary artist. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** PG-13, 84 min. *At Century Centre. Visit landmarktheatres.com for showtimes.*

Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory

Sinister 1971 children's film, taken from a book by Roald Dahl. Gene Wilder, a candy magnate, takes a group of kids on a tour of his factory, which is manned by dwarfs and filled with crafty machinery for the punishment of childhood vices. The crazy color schemes and visual effects once made this a popular head picture, though you'd have to be stoned to tolerate the score, which includes "The Candy Man." Mel Stuart directed. —**DAVE KEHR** G, 100 min. 35mm. *Screens as part of the Music Box Easter celebration, with audience participation. Sat 4/20, 2 PM. Music Box*

ALSO PLAYING

N The Curse of La Llorona

A widowed social worker and her children are targeted by a supernatural entity in this horror film directed by

Michael Chaves. *R, 93 min. ArcLight, Block 37, Century 12 and CineArts 6, City North 14, Ford City, Galewood Crossings, Navy Pier IMAX, New 400, River East 21, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11*

Daguerréotypes

Agnès Varda directed this 1976 French documentary about the shopkeepers on the street she lived on. In French with subtitles. 80 min. *Introduced by Reader contributor Kathleen Sachs. Wed 4/24, 8 PM. Comfort Station FREE*

Footwork on Film

Cinema 53 hosts this shorts program of Chicago "footwork" dance films by Brandon "Manny" Calhoun and Wills Glasspiegel. *Calhoun and Glasspiegel attend the screening. Followed by a footwork dance party DJ'd by RP Boo. Wed 4/24, 7 PM. Harper Theater FREE*

N Girls of the Sun

Eva Husson directed this French war drama about a battalion of Kurdish women in northern Iraq fighting to retake their small town from extremists. In English and subtitled Kurdish, French, and Arabic. 115 min. *At Century Centre. Visit landmarktheatres.com for showtimes.*

Hagazussa: A Heathen's Curse

Lukas Feigelfeld directed this 2017 German horror film about a 15th-century witch who curses those who tormented her as a youth with a devastating plague. In German with subtitles. 102 min. *Fri 4/19-Sat 4/20, midnight; and Wed 4/24, 7:30 PM. Music Box*

The 1938 Amateur Movie Show: A Reconstruction

A program that partially reconstructs the International Amateur Movie Show, which was held at Columbia University in 1938. Six of the ten amateur films screened have been located and will be presented by Charles Tepperman (University of Calgary; director of the Amateur Movie Database). 83 min. *Live vinyl mixing accompaniment by WHPK DJ Bryce Prewitt. Fri 4/19, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Logan Center for the Arts FREE*

Spell Reel

Filipa César directed this 2017 French/Portuguese documentary that uses footage of the 1960s Guinea-Bissau independence movement and contemporary engagements with that vintage material by surviving filmmakers and attendees at public screenings. In English and subtitled French, Fulah, and Portuguese. 96 min. *Thu 4/25, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art FREE*

Stuck

Michael Berry directed this 2017 musical/drama about a group of people trapped on on a New York City subway train. With Giancarlo Esposito, Amy Madigan, and Ashanti. PG-13, 90 min. *At River East 21. Visit amctheatres.com for showtimes.*

Tough Luck: Detroit Stories

Mary Sommers directed this documentary about Detroit, presented as oral history stories by residents. *Thu 4/25, 6 PM. Logan*

Women's View Film Festival

A one-program festival of eight short films from six countries curated by female detainees at Cook County Jail. *Preceded by a 6 PM reception. Sat 4/20, 7 PM. International Children's Media Center FR*

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Cambodian Rock Band @ LIZ LAUREN

REVIEW

Cambodia rocks

Cambodian Rock Band blends tragedy and joy into one of the best plays of the year.

By CATEY SULLIVAN

Near the end of the first act of Lauren Yee's *Cambodian Rock Band*, the cast delivers a blazing cover of the real-life Cambodian-American rock band Dengue Fever's "One Thousand Tears of a Tarantula." It's the kind of music that makes your synapses light up like firecrackers sparking over a riptide of endorphins. It's April 1974. We are in Cambodia. The band is called Cyclos, and its members know exactly how good they are. Their future is incandescent.

Except it isn't. Cyclos's next number is backed by helicopter rotors and the thumping

crunch of tanks. The Khmer Rouge is marching into Phnom Penh. Over the next four years, more than two million Cambodians will die. Among the first to be targeted in the genocide that ensued after the Americans pulled out of Cambodia and left it to the Khmer Rouge will be the artists.

Cambodian Rock Band doesn't flinch from portraying Cambodia as the killing field it became under Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge. Yee puts torture on stage as well as the aftermath that has scarred generations. But as the story moves between 2008 and the 1970s, Yee accomplishes something extraordinary: *Cambodian Rock Band* becomes a huge-hearted comedy as much as a horrifying depiction of humankind's potential for destruction. The comedy doesn't exploit or diminish the atrocities the Khmer Rouge inflicted. Instead, it lives alongside them as a stunning reminder that while joy and art can be silenced, they cannot be extinguished. Marti Lyons's skillful direction makes joy blare from the amps even as tragedy screams from the dialogue.

The plot follows Neary (Aja Wiltshire), the U.S.-raised daughter of Chum (Greg Watanabe), a survivor of the Khmer Rouge. Central to Chum's story is Duch (Rammel Chan), overseer of the S-21 interrogation and detention center. Numbers vary, but somewhere between 12,000 and 20,000 people were imprisoned in S-21. Only 12 survived. Yee uses those numbers to propel the plot, weaving history and fiction

into a drama that constantly surprises, even when you can see what's coming.

All the actors play their own instruments onstage, giving Cyclos a sound that veers from giddy melodic joy to dissonant nihilism. Wiltshire's vocals soar about the wailing strings and pounding percussion like a hard-rock benediction. As Leng, Cyclos's lead guitarist, Matthew C. Yee delivers a star turn that melds flawless technique with scorching emotion (Christopher Thomas Pow takes over the role April 22). As Chum, Watanabe hammers home the bass and creates a character that surprises and takes on new dimensions with every word he utters. Chan's Duch is disarmingly charismatic, a war criminal with an irresistible smile and a morally murky backstory.

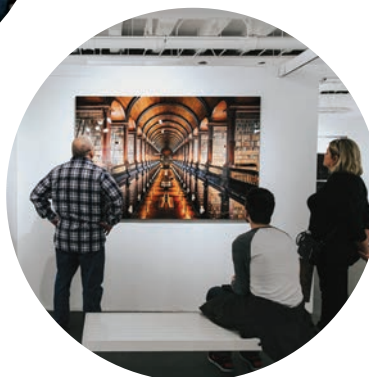
At the intersection of tragedy, rock, and comedy, Victory Gardens has launched one of the best plays of the year. As for the sound of Cyclos, it will have you wishing that album really existed. **A**

@CateySullivan

RR CAMBODIAN ROCK BAND
Through 5/5: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Wed 4/24, 2 PM, and Tue 4/30, 7:30 PM; no performance Wed 4/24, 7:30 PM, Victory Gardens Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln, 773-871-3000, victorygardens.org, \$25-\$71.

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A Chorus Line

MICHAEL COURIER

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RR One! singular sensation
Unlike dancers' bodies, *A Chorus Line* holds up.

On a bare stage, a sea of spandex roils, shining with that 1970s luster. A director calls out counts and steps and the group moves in rough coordination—a dropped step here, a stumble there, pirouettes, jazz hands, pelvic thrusts. He refers to them individually by number, collectively as “the kids.” It’s an audition, and everyone is dancing for permission to dance, and their thoughts, like the steps, are mostly the same: “God, I hope I get it,” “God, I really blew it,” “I really need this job.”

A Chorus Line, originally conceived, directed, and choreographed by Michael Bennett, with a book by James Kirkwood Jr. and Nicholas Dante, music by Marvin Hamlisch, and lyrics by Edward Kleban, is a salute to the brief and mostly anonymous lives of dancers who spend hours practicing, hustling, hoping, and ceaselessly laboring against the ravages of time, weight gain, injury, unemployment, and other forms of bad luck. Developed in workshops with real-life Broadway hoofers, the Tony-winning musical offers the opportunity to hear the voice of each member of a cast of dancers whose individual histories intersect in a mutual desire to win a spot for an instant in an unforgiving industry. The beauty of the ensemble emerges in potently sketched details—Sheila escaping an unhappy home at the ballet studio, Paul discovering his identity by imitating Cyd Charisse—every one chiseled into a distinct humanity by the friction of circumstance and love.

Porchlight’s production, featuring a fantastic cast directed by Brenda Didier, with choreography by Christopher Chase Carter and music direction by Linda Madonia, brings each character to life in wonderfully high resolution. **—IRENE HSIAO** *A CHORUS LINE* Through 5/31: Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM; also Wed 5/1 and 5/29 and Tue 5/28, 7:30 PM, and Sun 5/26, 6 PM; no performance Thu 5/23, Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn, 773-777-9884, porchlightmusictheatre.org, \$51-\$66.

Greeks bearing gifts

Corona boldly goes where mythology has never gone before.

Campy and fun, Elizabeth A.M. Keel’s *Corona* follows the voyage of the starship *Corona Borealis* and its captain, Ariadne, on a mission to bring 14 sacrifices to the minotaur on planet Crete. A spin on the classic Greek

myth, it hits every great sci-fi trope: a computer gone bad, a spaceship with a monster, a Kirk-like dude who wants some space sex, and an alternative mission only one person knows. There is humor, mystery, fighting, gods, sacrifices, and a bit of bestiality. Oh, those Greeks!

Focusing exclusively on sci-fi and fantasy, Otherworld Theatre does a lot with very little in terms of stage design, costumes, and special effects in artistic director Tiffany Keane Schaefer’s staging. Hannah Beaudry’s spacecraft set is sparse but magnificent, enhanced by Claire Sangster’s lighting that creates fourth-wall computer screens. True to genre, the costumes and props are at once beautifully ethereal and wonderfully cheap.

Stephanie Mattos is commanding as Ariadne, whose duality is explored in various ways, most interestingly as she vacillates from stoic stillness to an explosive dance routine (a nod to Uhura’s *Star Trek V* fan dance). Lonely and seeking friendship, Ariadne connects with Pneuma (Gaby Hernandez), healer and comic relief, and handsome prince Theseus (Bill Gordon), who brings his best Peter Quill to bear as he meatheads his way around both women. Overseeing the ship is DY-O (Scott Olson), an OS who, like Vision, goes from CPU to sentient android.

Without spoiling the story, the choice to cast the one Black actor as Ariadne unintentionally evokes some of America’s racist history, which unfortunately is never addressed. **—JOSH FLANDERS** *CORONA* Through 5/18: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2:30 and 7:30 PM (running in repertory with *Medusa Undone*), Otherworld Theatre, 3914 N. Clark, 773-857-2116, otherworldtheatre.org, \$20 or pay what you can.

Help! I’m dating a Nazi!

The story of *Hannah and Martin*, two philosophers in love

Wasting away on a student’s diet of crackers and boiled eggs, young Hannah Arendt (Christina Gorman) subjects her latest essay on neighborly love in Augustine to the chilly scrutiny of her married teacher, Martin Heidegger (Lawrence Grimm). Probably the two most brilliant people in Germany at that time, they fall in love, and in due course find themselves huddled clandestinely together in Martin’s hut in Todtnauberg. At first, Hannah is such a pale bundle of nerves there in her hero’s rooms that it feels playful of Martin to compare her to the mouse she’s seen nosing around her little grubby student apartment. Playful, that is, until terminology crops up later on in the play comparing Jews, of which Hannah is one, to rats—and Martin’s philosophy, thrilling wilderness of abstractions though it may be, starts looking like one charismatic German professor’s vast intellectual defense of the Third Reich.

Hannah spends most of the play standing up for Martin, an insane act of moral tight-rope walking, although Gorman doesn’t appear to take the same pleasure in baiting her opposition that the real Arendt did. She can make her case as a crusader for the autonomy of the intellect to whoever is listening, but when faced with the accusation that her feelings for the Nazi rector of Freiburg University are occluding her judgement, she comes close to backing down. Grimm’s Heidegger is commanding and memorable, but much too much of a scold. Louis Contey directs. **—MAX MALLER** *HANNAH AND MARTIN* Through 5/25: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Sat 5/25 3 PM; no performance Fri 5/17, Theater Wit, 1229 W. Belmont, 773-975-8150, sgtheatre.org, \$39, \$30 seniors, \$20 under 30, \$15 students.

RR A really bad hair day
Medusa Undone posits that the snake-haired one was another victim of rape culture.

Greek myths are essentially ancient soap operas, and such is the case with *Medusa Undone*, which reexamines the origin of the well-known monster but told through a modern feminist lens. Here the gods Athena and Poseidon are cast as monsters and Medusa is a timid sea nymph who just wants to serve Athena and is afraid of incurring the wrath of the gods. As Medusa leaves her terrible family life (her sisters are Gorgons, after all) and follows her spiritual passion to become a priestess, she finds herself caught betwixt Athena and Poseidon in a classic love triangle, which ends quite badly for her (not to mention leaving her with one terrible hairdo).

Writer Bella Poynton frames the story as a critique of rape culture and presents Medusa as a victim, too trusting of Poseidon’s friendship to maintain agency over her decisions in the face of his aggressive behavior. Athena, played with divine strength by Jessica Goforth, lashes out at Medusa after she’s assaulted by Poseidon, exemplifying the victim-blaming all too familiar these days. Although her acting chops are not quite on par with the rest of director Tiffany Keane Schaefer’s ensemble, Mary-Kate Arnold’s Medusa is the sort of vital feminist character not seen enough onstage. Michael Jay Bullaro’s Poseidon perfectly embodies the self-serving arrogance of an abuser who imagines himself sensitive.

The god-human relationship here is a metaphor for

celebrity idolatry and the lack of consequence so many with power have maintained, as well as the dangers of living for others versus ourselves. With timely, ambitious productions, Otherworld Theatre is definitely one to watch. **—JOSH FLANDERS** *MEDUSA UNDONE* Through 5/18: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2:30 and 7:30 PM (running in repertory with *Corona*), Otherworld Theatre, 3914 N. Clark, 773-857-2116, otherworldtheatre.org, \$20 or pay what you can.

RR East Texas blues
Utility shows the high cost of living in quiet desperation.

Interrobang Theatre Project presents the midwest premiere of Emily Schwend’s low-key, but surprisingly substantial drama about a working-class woman fighting like hell just to keep the lights on. Amber (a seething, world-weary Brynne Barnard) lets her deadbeat wandering husband, Chris (Patrick TJ Kelly), back into her life, but can never decide whether his presence makes life easier or harder. Chris’s older brother, Jim (Kevin D’Ambrosio, carrying the emotional weight of the whole play), is always hovering around Amber’s house, going out of his way to do her favors. Her mother, Laura (Barbara Figgins), helps out too, but charges a heavy premium, with sighs and side-eye at the smallest request.

The event around which the story revolves is an eight-year-old girl’s birthday party, but its dramatic peak comes before the cake is brought out, when Jim awkwardly attempts to tell Amber how he feels about her. Schwend is very good at giving voice to characters who are barely verbal. The evident pain with which Jim struggles to express his emotions is the heart of the entire play. By keeping things bottled up, rather than exploding into melodrama or tragedy, the quiet desperation of these people is all the clearer.

According to the program, the play is set in east Texas, but the southern accents in this production fluctuated too much for me to peg it to any particular locale. It’s the only false note in an otherwise-resonant portrait of family life deep in the shadows of the American dream. Georgette Verdin directed. **—DMITRY SAMAROV** *UTILITY* Through 5/4: Thu-Fri 8 PM, Sat 3 and 8 PM, Mon 8 PM, Rivendell Theatre, 5779 N. Ridge, 312-219-4140, interrobangtheatreproject.com, \$32, \$16 students.



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Meeting up for mahjong

The classic Chinese tile game is having a renaissance downtown.

By EMILY MCTAVISH

The climax of last summer's hit movie *Crazy Rich Asians* featured a tense exchange between two characters over a round of the Chinese tile game of mahjong. Mahjong games here in Chicago, though—at least those organized by Debbie Turner—are more congenial and less intense.

Many of the players are beginners, and it's another language they are learning as they move the tiles across the table. They call out their tiles—shortening “bamboo” to “bams” and “characters” to “cracks”—and name the directional winds, or dragons.

“It sounds good. It's nice when they clack together,” Turner says. “There's something satisfying about playing with tiles.”

When Turner, now 46, came to Chicago in 2011, she had a difficult time finding a group to play mahjong with, especially the type of mahjong she learned in Mexico City, which was a hybrid variation of Chinese and other versions. She was at first reluctant to learn the American style, which differs from Chinese mahjong in that players have to commit to a certain sequence early in the game and there can be fewer options to switch. She was also turned off by the cards from the National Mah Jongg League outlining the plays.

Turner did find other women to teach her, though, and she had her moment when everything fell into sync. She realized that if the



Debbie Turner © EMILY MCTAVISH

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game had been explained in another way, she might have grasped it better, and it gave her the inspiration to teach.

Since then, she has been organizing games through the website Meetup. When she first began looking at the site, she found there were few people willing to teach newcomers.

“There's all these Meetups for intermediates [but] no beginners,” Turner says. “I thought, well, this is a perfect chance.”

This past January, Turner started a new meetup for novice mahjong players meeting at both the Renaissance Court at the Chicago Cultural Center and the WeWork location on West Illinois Street; it attracted players from all over the city. (The game in the Cultural Center also attracted spectators, but the group had to leave in March due to complaints about the noise of the tiles.)

Turner was shocked by how many people were interested in learning mahjong.

“When I started, I really just wanted everybody to know this game,” she says. “I knew it was out there, but people didn't know about it. Well, let me teach you.”

Novice player Anne Winship is now in Turner's second stage of learning, which focuses on strategies. During the first strategy lesson, Winship says, the players would just draw the tiles to figure out what hands could be played without actually playing through a game.

“We kept saying, ‘Let's play a game,’” says Winship, a board game enthusiast. “There's a turning point where your brain will get that challenge, but I'm not sure if I'm there yet.”

Sandra Beaty, a retired clinical psychologist, wanted to learn mahjong not only as a social activity but also in part, she jokes, to feed a stereotype.

“I'm an old woman so I wanted to do something where I could sit for a while and use my brain,” Beaty says.

The Meetup group now has 84 members. Turner's pupils are mostly retired women, but she has recently gotten more interest from women and even a few men in their 30s and 40s. Mahjong has not always been a game for retirement-aged people, though.

The origins of mahjong in the United States are rooted in Jewish-American culture, according to the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, which ran an exhibit about the game in 2010. Joseph P. Babcock is credited with popularizing it in America in the 1920s after learning to play in China while working for Standard Oil as an engineer.

The National Mah Jongg League was founded in 1937 when a group of players, mostly Jewish women, met in New York to standardize the American way of playing and the rules. The league now formats a new playing card each year for purchase, and donates the proceeds to various charities across the country.

Just in time for the release of the 2019 American mahjong cards (they're scheduled to ship this week and Turner has made peace with them), Turner is organizing new sessions for beginners and playing times at WeWork and the Ambassador Public House in Greektown.

One of Turner's intentions when she organized the gatherings was to have people teaching different variations of mahjong. While this hasn't happened yet, she is still hopeful.

“I want everyone to see this game,” she says. “I think it's time for it to come out.”

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On Living and Dying
on the Factory Floor

David Ranney has no nostalgia for the days of middle-class manufacturing jobs.

By CHRISTIAN BELANGER

In the mid-70s, David Ranney quit his position at the University of Iowa, where he was a tenured professor of urban planning, and moved to Chicago for a job at the Workers' Rights Center, a free legal clinic for industrial workers run out of a southeast Chicago storefront. When money got tight, Ranney decided to look for work at one of the many factories in the neighborhood. Armed with a made-up work history and a couple of friends willing to act as fake references, he landed a position at a shop that built centrifuges. Over the next seven years, he'd bounce from factory to factory, working at a box maker, a freight car manufacturer, a steel fabricator, and the Solo Cup Company. Burned out and nearly broke, Ranney eventually made his way back to academia after a chance encounter at a cocktail party led to a position at a community research center affiliated with UIC, where he's now a professor emeritus.

Living and Dying on the Factory Floor, released earlier this month, is Ranney's account of his time spent laboring in southeast Chicago and northern Indiana. At the heart of the book is the story of a year-long stint at Chicago Shortening, where Ranney helped organize and lead a prolonged wildcat strike. While the strike ultimately failed, Ranney says the experience was illuminating: within the racially charged environment of the factory, the action was able to, however briefly, bring together different groups of white, Black, and Latinx workers in solidarity. At his apartment in Pilsen, where he's lived for the last 35 years, I spoke with Ranney about *Living and Dying*. This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

In the introduction, you write that the book isn't a memoir. Can you explain what you mean by that?

I went to a memoir class, and the teacher said, "Write down three events that you think were transformative in your life. And you have

15 seconds to do it." So I just jot these down, and they were all deaths. One was a kid that, when I was in fifth grade, got hit by a car. My dad died when I was a senior in high school. But the third one was the death of Charles Sanders. [Sanders was an employee at Chicago Shortening who was stabbed to death by a scab worker shortly after the strike ended.] And that really surprised me, and I realized that his death was about more than just his death although that was very, very traumatic.

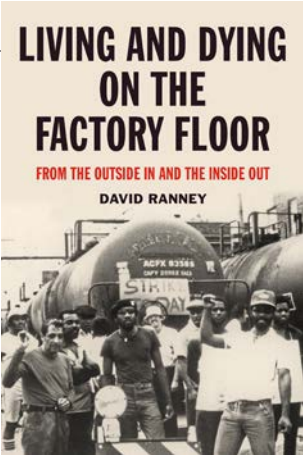
You know, he's a person who had some rough edges, you might say. But during the strike, he sobered up. I never saw him high during the strike. And it meant a lot to him, to stand up to these fuckers.

The things that happened at the plant that really shed a lot of light on the relationship of race and class, immigration policy, class policy, this whole idea about middle-class jobs as seen through the eyes of not just me, but workers that I encountered over a period of seven years. And so that's not exactly a memoir.

One person at Chicago Shortening that really interested me was Heinz, the avowed Nazi. Can you explain what was going on with him?

Well, Heinz took on all the symbols of fascism, you know. He had swastikas, he had Confederate flags on his jacket and on his motorbike. But he hung out with the Black workers. And he'd come down the hall and they'd all go "Sieg heil, Heinz, sieg heil!" They'd laugh and so forth. And he was very militant during the strike. He was solidly working class, and he saw all the other workers as his allies. But why he did the other thing? I don't know. He was just a real contradiction.

You mentioned earlier, and in the book, that you're really annoyed by the rhetoric around bringing back "middle-class jobs" to the U.S.



from some politicians and pundits. What do you mean by that?

It's not just that we probably will never have manufacturing at the level that we have—there were a million-and-a-half manufacturing workers in the area. It's also that I don't want people to have to work at jobs like that. There's nothing "middle" about it. A lot of it's really awful.

At that time, workers really could run the factories. I mean, there was enough knowledge there that they could do that. The autoworkers could have run a plant. So one point of view is: OK, workers will take over all these factories and run them. But the other truth is that a lot of them hated their jobs and didn't want to do that. So what is our goal as radicals: Do we want to help workers run these factories for the other society, or do we want to just get rid of those jobs and get rid of work altogether? At Chicago Shortening it was the second thing—those workers hated that place. They called it "the job." And they were always doing little petty acts of sabotage, or they were drunk or stoned. They had no desire to, you know, make shortening.

Reading about all the different groups that came out and supported the strike, it seems like there was a really vibrant, if fractured, leftist world in Chicago at the time.

Oh yeah, really, really vicious.

I was in the Sojourner Truth Organization for a time and we had a number of people that worked at a plant called Stewart-Warner on the north side. And every left group had people in Stewart-Warner, because it was one of the few plants where the workers entered from the sidewalk into the plant. And the parking lot was across the street. And so you could leaflet people as they came in.

At the end, all these differences really do come out. This Marxist-Leninist group wrote a critique of how we behaved in the Chicago Shortening strike. It was quite fascinating, really. They were totally critical because, you know, we didn't see ourselves as a vanguard party and we didn't take [the plant] over and organize it better. They thought that we had made this huge mistake. ■

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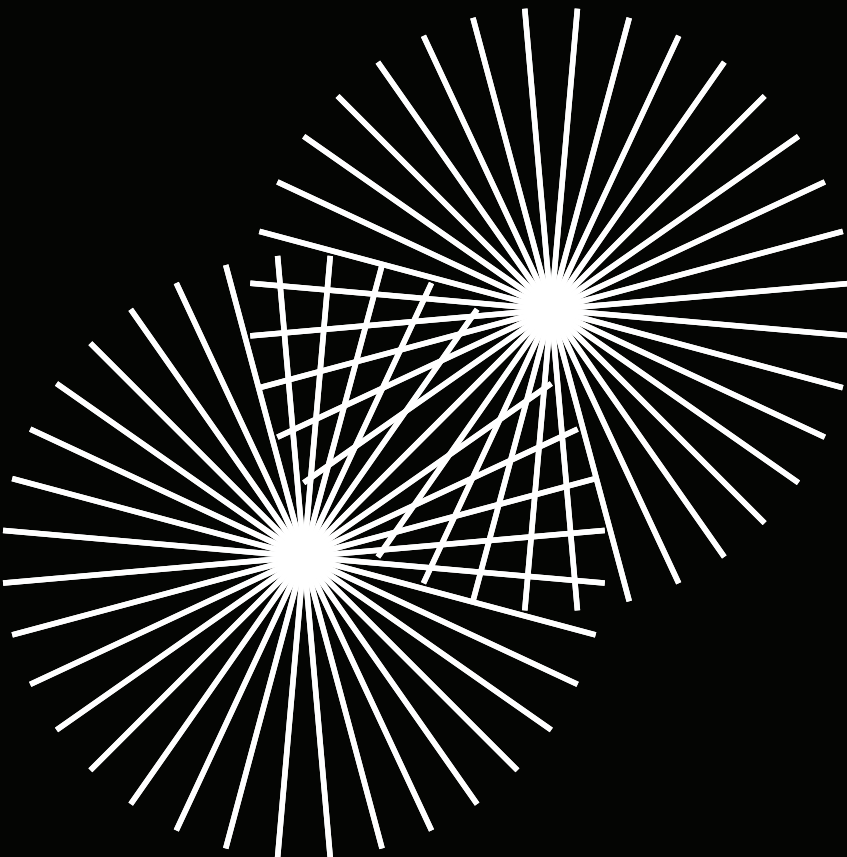
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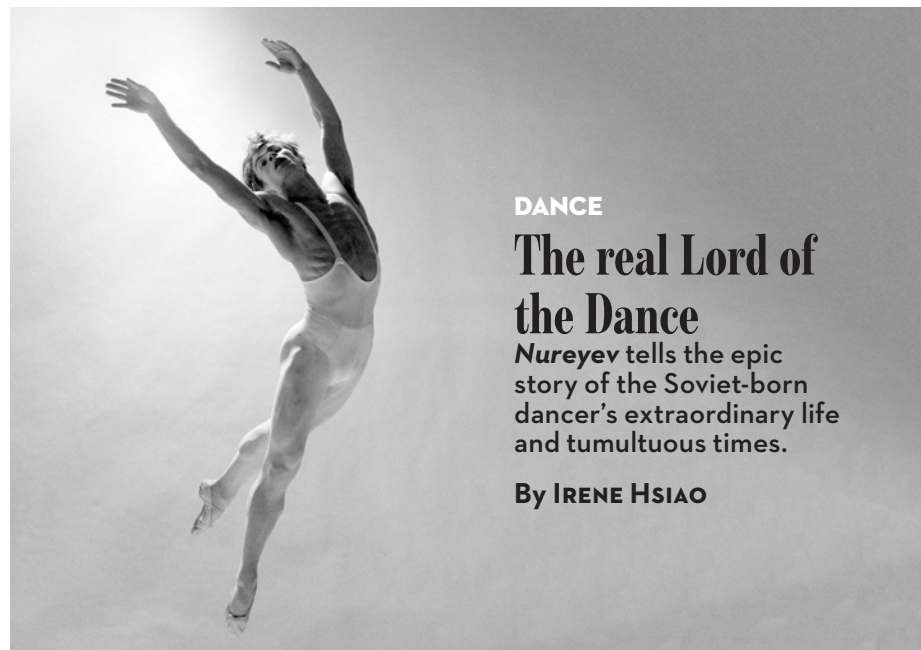
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DANCE

The real Lord of the Dance

Nureyev tells the epic story of the Soviet-born dancer's extraordinary life and tumultuous times.

By IRENE HSIAO

Nureyev

He moved with a feral grace, with a heat that blazes through the grain of the film that remains, with a virtuosity that never disguises—but rather illuminates—the sheer risk of dance, the insolence of a human daring to flout the laws of gravity, time, and space to attain a momentary immortality. He lived with furious energy, inspiring multitudes, consorting with celebrities, infuriating authorities. “He was Mick Jagger before Mick Jagger. . . . He was the most beautiful man you could ever imagine,” said Elizabeth Kaye, one of his many biographers, on the *Esquire Classic* podcast. “He was a figure who was so enormous, he transcended everything—fashion, dance, celebrity, politics. We wanted to recreate why he was such a cultural icon,” says David Morris, who, with his sister Jacqui Morris, spent three years in pursuit of the essence of a dancer history has never replaced. The result is *Nureyev*, a documentary film that tells the story of the man some called the “Lord of the Dance.”

Rudolf Nureyev was born on the Trans-Siberian Railway in 1938, “shaken from the womb,” as he says in a vintage clip reproduced in the Morrises’ film, into a lifetime of motion. The son of a Red Army commissar and raised by his mother in a Tatar Muslim household, he was determined from an early age to become a dancer and ran away—first from his home in the central Russian city of Ufa, then from the Soviet Union—in order to do so. The first

dancer to defect from the USSR during the Cold War, Nureyev “was born in Stalin’s Russia and ended up one of the most famous people in the world,” says Jacqui Morris. “His life story reads like a sprawling epic novel.” Combining never-before-seen footage of rehearsals and performances with interviews and scenes (choreographed by Russell Maliphant) that tell Nureyev’s story through dance, *Nureyev* portrays the dancer’s life in the context of a tumultuous history that includes persecution by KGB officers, torrid relationships on and off the stage (including a legendary partnership with prima ballerina Margot Fonteyn at the Royal Ballet and a loving rivalry with Danish danseur noble Erik Bruhn), the personal heartbreak of exile, and the global disaster of AIDS.

“People loved him,” says Jacqui Morris. “Mobs queued up around the block. Ballet was more for the masses than it is now.” *Nureyev* brings that heady period to life. Evoked as much in the unexpectedly racy rendition of *Swan Lake* he performed with Fonteyn as in footage of their fabulous arrest in a drug bust at a party in San Francisco (her adjusting a fur coat, him winking at the camera) before Nureyev’s illness and death from complications of AIDS, the nostalgia in this film is strong and bitter. His eyes burn with hectic life in every frame, too quickly here and gone. **A**

 @IreneCHsiao

Lisa Alvarado and Joshua Abrams work in studios joined by an open doorway in their shared home.  CHARLIE GROSS



Natural Information Society make the stage a home—and vice versa

Joshua Abrams and Lisa Alvarado help give this Chicago collective's transcendent minimalism a family feeling.

By **BILL MEYER**

Chicago composer and musician Joshua Abrams likes to compare the guimbri (aka gimbri, guembri, or sintir), a traditional three-string bass lute associated with Morocco's Gnawa people, to the Roland TR-808, an early-80s drum machine that became foundational to hip-hop, Chicago house, and a long list of other genres. "Sometimes I'll joke that it's the original 808, because it has a percussive skin mixed with a bass tone," Abrams says. "It has a strong sub-bass too."

Abrams is widely known as a bassist, playing jazz, freely improvised music, indie rock, and hip-hop with the likes of Nicole Mitchell, Mike Reed, Dave Rempis, Will Oldham, Prefuse 73, and the Roots. During a long association with Kartemquin Films documentary director Steve James, he's created soundtracks for James's *Life Itself* (2014), *The Interrupters* (2011), and the series *America to Me* (2018).

But Abrams plays some of his most personally significant music on the guimbri. "I think it's a very sophisticated instrument for centering and focus, and that's been an aim or concern with presenting music that can offer that possibility for the listener," he says. "For me it just became the locus to bring many different musical interests together. Sometimes inspired by very old or traditional music, sometimes inspired by contemporary music, electronic music, popular music—and that musical amalgam is central to the project's character."

The project he's referring to is Natural Information Society, a constantly evolving collective that adopted that name in 2010. It also involves his wife, artist and musician Lisa Alvarado, and it's very much a family affair: Abrams composes the music, while Alvarado handles the Society's visuals. Currently represented by the Bridget Donahue gallery in New York, she has exhibited in Chicago, Glasgow,

and Tbilisi, Georgia, but NIS has given her the chance to share her work with people who might never make it to an art show. Her large-scale paintings, whose intricate, repetitive geometric patterns rhyme with the hypnotic rhythms and interwoven tone colors of NIS's music, appear as stage backdrops and album covers.

"Our aesthetic and our sensibilities worked so well together and kind of reflected each other, and now they're intertwined and inform each other," Abrams says. "Also on a life-decision level, sometimes people need to pursue very separate paths. You can be very supportive, and you do your thing and I'll do mine, and we come together to support each other. But for us it seems more fun to pursue a thing together. Then we would be in it together and be on the road together."

In the couple's home, which they share with a three-year-old daughter, their studios

occupy adjacent rooms joined by an open doorway—so the acts of painting, playing, and composing can intermingle when they occur simultaneously. "I work in a home studio, where rehearsals and recordings happen," says Alvarado. "For me the context of where a

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work is made and how it is used is integral to its meaning and energy. The sounds of many great musicians, including Hamid Drake and Ari Brown, fill our home and vibrate the walls of my studio while I work. Experiencing rehearsals in front of my works showed me how well they could work onstage."

Abrams hopes the paintings can provide a focal point for the audience, and he enjoys having them onstage. "Sometimes they're hung way above us, but it always kind of changes the environment," he says. "For me that's a way to make whatever stage we're on feel more comfortable, more at home—and to give that signal that this might be a different sort of experience than is typical."

In a recent article that Alvarado wrote for the *Wire*, she credited this concept—"the stage as a home, and the home as a stage"—to one of Natural Information Society's inspirations, the artistic partnership of Don Cherry and his wife, Monika "Moki" Cherry. Don first became known as the pocket-trumpet-playing foil to Ornette Coleman on Coleman's groundbreaking late-50s and early-60s free-jazz recordings for Contemporary and Atlantic, and he subsequently traveled the world, picking up ideas and instruments that he used to make increasingly genre-transcending music. In the early 70s he and Moki, an artist and musician, formed the Organic Music Society, which performed with an international assortment of jazz and folk musicians (as well as Swedish summer-school students) and preferred communal, public settings to conventional jazz clubs. When they played at schools or museums, for instance, they discovered that people interacted with their output in different ways. Moki painted the gatefold cover of the project's double LP; look inside and you'll find photos of Don jamming with their kids.

In the *Wire*, Alvarado acknowledges the precedent of Moki's colorful paintings and ➔

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talismanic banners. Her article also includes a 1978 photo of a young drummer who'd recently started playing with Don, reclining on a couch in the Cherrys' house in front of one such banner: Hamid Drake. Renowned for his work with Peter Brötzmann, Bill Laswell, William Parker, and Michael Zerang, among many others, Drake needs little introduction. Based in Chicago but active around the world, he's been a key figure in the development of Natural Information Society—and not just because he's one degree removed from the Cherrys. He's contributed as both a spiritual guide and an active participant, joining the band onstage occasionally and playing on two of its albums, including the brand-new double LP *Mandatory Reality*, released April 12 by Eremite Records.

Drake and Abrams have played together since the 1990s, when they shared the stage with venerable tenor saxophonist Fred Anderson. Once Drake knew that Abrams had a guimbri, he kept track of the bassist's progress on it. Abrams's first recording with the guimbri appears on a 2007 album by Anderson and Drake, *From the River to the Ocean* (Thrill Jockey). He subsequently played it in Drake's reggae-informed group Bindu. "Those experiences were very important," Abrams says. "They encouraged me to practice so that I got comfortable playing the instrument, and to let the music be the guide rather than arrive at a position that was solely intellectual."

It took more time and scrupulous experimentation for Abrams to sort out how he wanted to use the guimbri in his own music. Among the records he's made under his name or leadership, he first used it on the 2010 release *Natural Information* (Eremite), which combines solo home-studio creations, an electric trio session with guitarist Emmett Kelly and drummer Frank Rosaly, and recordings where Abrams plays bass with two jazz comrades, vibraphonist Jason Adasiewicz and drummer Nori Tanaka. Linking these disparate elements is a meditative quality that's reinforced by the weighty resonance of the guimbri and by the accompanists' willingness to rein in spotlight-grabbing impulses in service to the centering insistence of Abrams's rhythms.

Alvarado first appears on Natural Information's successor, 2012's *Representing* (Eremite), and though she's on only half the album, her droning harmonium (a bellows-driven reed organ) and clustered gong strikes enhance the music's ceremonial air. The personnel on *Representing* vary even more from track to track than they do on *Natural*



Lisa Alvarado's large-scale 2011 painting *Representing* (pictured here in the 2015 MCA exhibit "The Freedom Principle: Experiments in Art and Music, 1965 to Now") has served as a stage backdrop for Natural Information Society. Similar patterns occur in her artwork for the NIS album of the same name. © NATHAN KEAY © MCA CHICAGO

Information, reflecting the fluid membership of the nascent NIS. But subsequent lineups have been relatively stable (from song to song, if not from album to album), made up of musicians capable of maintaining their individuality while connecting the disparate influences that feed into the collective's sound.

"Everyone playing on any of the records is there because I love what they do and they were interested in the project," explains Abrams. "I like to work with musicians who have distinctive sounds and approaches, and I want the music to have room for their voices." Portions of 2015's *Magnetoception* (Eremite), which features Kelly and Jeff Parker on electric guitars as well as Drake on hand and kit drums, could almost pass for a late-night meet-up between the Velvet Underground and preternaturally eclectic multi-instrumentalist Sandy Bull. On 2015's *Autoimaginary* (Drag City), a collaboration with Chicago synth-and-reeds trio Bitchin Bajas, and 2017's *Simultona-*

lity (Eremite), Ben Boye's radiant Autoharp and dense, winding keyboard figures sync up with terse guitar and drum-kit grooves, demonstrating a trance-inducing common ground between minimalist composition and Krautrock beats.

In June 2017, NIS returned home from a U.S. tour and played a record-release show for *Simultonality* at Constellation. Abrams used the show to debut a new approach: For its extended final piece, a three-piece horn section (alto saxophonist Nick Mazzarella, cornetist Ben LaMar Gay, and bass clarinetist Jason Stein) joined the touring ensemble (Abrams, Alvarado, Boye, and drummer Mikel Patrick Avery) and guest percussionist Hamid Drake. The piece was built, like many NIS compositions, around the guimbri's patiently ascending-and-descending lines. At first the horns and keyboards followed Abrams's steps, but soon the instruments branched out to follow coordinated but independent paths. Their



Natural Information Society open for Body/Head at the Art Institute in March 2019. © JULIA DRATEL

interwoven lines fit together like the repeating abstract shapes in one of Alvarado's paintings, and the occasional solo interjections accented the billow and flux of the larger patterns like the metallic paints she uses to throw matte colors into relief. Two days after the concert, that eight-piece version of Natural Information Society went into Chicago studio Electrical Audio to record a 40-minute version of that piece, "Finite," as well as the three other compositions that comprise *Mandatory Reality*.

"On this record, the music is more specific—there are clearly systems at play," says Abrams. "I wanted the album to focus on extended duration and slowness, to create a space and timing where the musicians can actively listen and make choices based on that listening. I wanted to write for multiple horns in the group but maintain NIS's interwoven dynamic. In NIS the orchestration lives within the sound of the guimbri—the low tones are the soil from which the other sounds grow. The challenge of adding horns is that they can easily take over the sound of a group, so I tried to write in a way that blends their timbres with the other instruments. Everyone has the opportunity to take their time to listen across the ensemble and focus on how they approach the notes they are asked to play."

"Finite" is the album's center of gravity, and for going on two years it's been the mainstay of the Society's live sets, where it can last from 30 minutes to more than an hour. On a recent European tour, a quartet version of NIS (Abrams, Alvarado, Stein, and Avery) played it every night. Avery puts a quick backbeat behind the piece, turning some concerts into prolonged dance parties.

"I think working in between the cracks of established genres has potential to find new forms," Abrams says. "My ongoing focus for the group is creating structures that might not be so obvious upon first listen. Sometimes that gets mistaken for no structure. We're trying to arrive at something different, and that's where the energy comes from—both through the process of finding and through inhabiting a sound world that doesn't easily fit categorization."

The balance of patient ensemble development and strategically complementary individual contributions that characterizes "Finite" is also evident on the album's side-length opener, "In Memory's Prism." Abrams wrote it to soundtrack the film component of artist Simon Starling's *Project for a Rift Valley Crossing*. "The film is of a canoe trip across the Rift Valley in a boat made of the magnesium derived from the water which it is traversing," says Abrams. "That's a beautiful metaphor for this music to accompany."

Natural Information Society plays a concert to celebrate the release of *Mandatory Reality* at Constellation on June 28. Between now and then, Alvarado will help keep the group's sounds circulating. In May she'll have a booth at gargantuan international art fair Frieze New York, and NIS will be with her in sound and spirit. "I'm going to be showing some new pieces that I have, some smaller-scaled works that are longer in scale. Maybe you've seen one from photos on this last tour. But there's also going to be a sound piece that Josh and I have been working on—that's going to be something different for an art-fair environment." **A**

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PICK OF THE WEEK

Drone titans Sunn O))) play two shows at Rockefeller Chapel and release the beautiful new *Life Metal*



© RONALD DICK

SUNN O))), PAPA M

Fri 4/19 and Mon 4/22, 7 PM, Rockefeller Chapel, 5850 S. Woodlawn, \$36, Friday sold out. 17+

IF YOU'VE EVER HEARD the music of dark-hooded dronemeisters Sunn O))), you may have reached the conclusion that its core members, Stephen O'Malley and Greg Anderson, have a different sense of time than the rest of us. Their tectonically slow-paced music certainly seems dense enough to warp the space around it. Still, it's been four years since they put out their seventh full-length, *Kannon*, and the duo have seen fit to reward us for our patience with not one but two new studio albums in 2019—both of which were recorded last year at Chicago's Electrical Audio with Steve Albini. The first, *Life Metal*, comes out April 26, though a limited-edition double LP was available for Record Store Day on April 13. This time out, the band's themes and aesthetics have a spiritual, life-affirming quality (also embodied in gorgeous cover art by Samantha Keely Smith), but fear not—their music hasn't lost any of its characteristic weight. O'Malley and Anderson's crew of collaborators on *Life Metal* include Australian composer Anthony Pateras (who plays pipe organ on "Troubled Air"), Chicago bassist and baritone guitarist Tim Midyett (known for his work in Mint Mile, Bottomless Pit, and Silkworm), and Icelandic polymath Hildur Guðnadóttir, whose voice, electric cello, and electroacoustic banjo hybrid (known as a "halldorophone") add haunting beauty to the epic 25-minute "Novae." The second album from the Albini sessions, *Pyroclasts*, is due this fall, and between releases Sunn O))) will celebrate their 20th year with an epic American and European tour. Their two Chicago shows, which take place in the acoustic wonderland of Rockefeller Chapel, should be unforgettable experiences.

—MONICA KENDRICK

THURSDAY18

PINK AVALANCHE *Anatomy of Habit and Djunah* open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$8. 21+

Fronted by Chicago music-scene staple Che Arthur (former member of Atombombpocketknife, sometimes Bob Mould backup singer, and sound guy extraordinaire), Pink Avalanche have been cranking out wiry, moody postpunk since 2013. Formed by Arthur and a longtime partner in crime, drummer Adam Reach, as a way to further their musical and personal connection, the band fleshed out their lineup with second guitarist Kortland Chase and bassist Pete Croke, and set about making two records of angular midwestern punk rock that's as catchy as it is aggressive. It's been five years since Pink Avalanche released *The Luminous Heart of Nowhere*, and their new album, *III*, comes following a shift in lineup: last year Croke left the city to start a new life in Puerto Rico, and Chase moved to bass. As a trio, Pink Avalanche show that having fewer members doesn't necessarily push a band into a "less is more" approach. In fact, the tracks on *III* offer little breathing room; they're dense, knotty, and layered with acrobatic guitars, terse rhythms, and Arthur's catchy but downer vocals. The sound is rooted in Chicago's tradition of heavy moods and equally indebted to the city's current rock climate. This show is a release party for *III*. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

FRIDAY19

STEVE GUNN *Gun Outfit* opens. 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$20. 18+

Steve Gunn's new album, *The Unseen In Between* (Matador), contains the most assertively outgoing music of the Brooklyn-based guitarist's career. It grabs the listener right out of the gate with the soaring strings, reverberant electric guitar, and swinging upright bass (played by Bob Dylan band-leader Tony Garnier) of "New Moon." Gunn has never sounded as confident as he does singing

the album's sequence of gracefully winding melodies, and its gorgeous production (from Chicago-based multi-instrumentalist James Elkington, who's worked with the likes of Jeff Tweedy, Richard Thompson, and Brokeback) delivers one perfectly placed detail after another. *The Unseen In Between* also includes some of Gunn's most emotionally resonant lyrics to date; "New Familiar" conveys both the comfort and the inadequacy of nostalgia when dealing with a turbulent present, and in "Vagabond" he searches for evidence of his late father's love and guidance in his memories upon accepting that calling him up is no longer an option. Though the album focuses on songwriting, Gunn is also a splendid guitarist who can blend lilting country melody, Saharan-influenced drone, and bracing noise into a single captivating line. Backed by a lean combo that includes second guitarist Paul Sukeena (Spacín', Angel Olsen, Chris Forsyth's Solar Motel Band), Gunn will have plenty of room to tell tales with his fingers as well as his words. —BILL MEYER

SUNN O))) See *Pick of the Week* at left. See also Monday. **PAPA M** opens. 7 PM, Rockefeller Chapel, 5850 S. Woodlawn, sold out. 17+

SATURDAY20

DAVE DAVIES See also Sunday. For this show, Davies will be backed by members of Frisbie. 8 PM, SPACE, 1245 Chicago Ave., Evanston, sold out. 18+

Whenever folks discuss the great guitarists of the British Invasion, names such as Eric Clapton, George Harrison, and Pete Townshend reliably come up, but one rocker always seems to get short shrift: Dave Davies of the Kinks. I'd argue that Davies is the most influential of them all. The Kinks tunes "You Really Got Me" and "All Day and All of the Night" were the garage-band shots heard around the world—the simple but urgent riffage and lustful, sweaty teenage lyrics were clumsily copied in a million basements by 60s teens while the Beatles were still making jangly pop music and singing about holding hands. Davies's raw, overdriven ax



Tatiana Hazel

© NOLIS ANDERSON

MUSIC



Angela James JORDAN MARTINS

tone basically signaled the primordial dawn of heavy rock way back in 1964, which should be enough to earn him a place in power-chording history. Dave's brother Ray, Kinks singer and rhythm guitarist, got most of the songwriting attention in the group, as his multifaceted tales broke new ground in their sophistication. But Dave's tunes were just as essential and kept the Kinks' rock edge strong. The ode to teenage isolation "I'm Not Like Everybody Else" has been covered by countless groups who've homed in on its ominous, angsty vibe; "Susannah's Still Alive" proved him capable of writing hits with bouncy jubilation; "Death of a Clown" shows his knack for creating catchy, bittersweet chamber pop. The two Davies brothers famously did not get along, which kept the Kinks apart for decades after their split in 1996. In 2018, they reportedly got together to begin work on a new studio album, but for the time being at least, the only way to see them play these days is to catch each of them solo. In a live setting, Ray tends to sit and tell stories between bits of acoustic songs, whereas Dave knows his status as a rawk god and continues to stake his claim with Flying V in hand (though when I saw him at the Abbey Pub ages back, he'd tamed his guitar tone a bit, making it a bit slicker a la ZZ Top's *Eliminator*). Last year, Dave Davies's sons unearthed some demos their dad had recorded at Konk Studios in the 70s, which were released as *Decade*. Though that album sadly features spanking-new overdubs, Davies continues to shine as a multihued songwriter on melancholic tracks such as "Cradle to the Grave," with its last-call-at-the-bar, scratchy-voiced Faces vibe. According to recent set lists, he tends to play Kinks classics rather than his recently unearthed solo material, but it's a small miracle that he's out there on the road at all—he suffered a stroke in 2004 and spent years recovering from its effects. Go see this living legend now, and pray that full Kinks reunion is still on its way. —**STEVE KRAKOW**

TATIANA HAZEL *Part of Waldos Forever Fest. Big Freedia headlines; Tatiana Hazel, Jill Hopkins (DJ set), White Mystery, Air Credits, Maureen Sandiego & Rachel Relman, Lucy Stooile & Ramona Slick, Akasha, and All the Way Kay (DJ set) open. 4:20 PM (music starts at 10:50 AM), outside Dispensary 33, 5001 N. Clark, free with RSVP at do312.com/waldosforeverfest, 18+. Later the same day, A. Chal headlines; Tatiana Hazel and Chava open. 10 PM, Concord Music Hall, 2047 N. Milwaukee, \$20. 18+*

Tatiana Hazel's musical career put down its first root a decade ago, when the Chicago Latinx artist taught herself to play guitar at age 11. Two years later, she started uploading acoustic, heart-on-sleeve originals to YouTube—some of which have since been viewed more than 40,000 times. Hazel has evolved her sound over time, and a few years ago she began rolling out glossy pop material that brings together swooning R&B melodies, Caribbean riddims, and silken electronic production. Now 21, she demonstrates her skills, ambition, and confidence on her self-released July EP, *Toxic*. She sings in English and Spanish, oscillating between the two languages on the clattering dance number "Por Ti." And even when Hazel addresses an unbalanced romantic relationship, as she does on the pained, woozy "Can't Help but Notice," she always sounds completely in control of her style and her destiny. —**LEOR GALIL**

ANGELA JAMES *Spectralina opens. 3:30 PM, Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$10.*

For most parents, the phrase "children's music" triggers flashbacks to annoying sing-alongs—Raffi's "Baby Beluga," for instance, or anything by that purple monstrosity, Barney. Fear not, though: Angela James's *Quiet Night* isn't that kind of children's music. The singer-songwriter developed the album while caring for her infant daughter and struggling with postpartum depression; its songs started out as melodic fragments she'd hum to try to get the baby to sleep. Jason Stein on bass clarinet, Charles Rumbach on vibraphone, and Katherine Young on bassoon complement James's velvety voice on soothing, melancholy tunes that slide between sorrow and hope, sleep and waking. On "You're Always at Home," James sings to her daughter, "I don't know what you know / I don't need what you need," even as she reassures her, "Though you may feel alone / I'm just a room away." And on "Sun and Moon," she reflects on the bittersweet duality that one's children are closer than one's heart but start drifting away as soon as they're out in the world: "The center of my universe is wherever you are." It's not just a joyous sentiment but a terrifying one, no matter how gentle her delivery. James knows that in order for reassurances to work, you first need to acknowledge the dangers. Her album is a balm for children—and their parents too. —**NOAH BERLATSKY**

MUTANT BEAT DANCE *Part of the Function series; Justin Aulis Long opens. 10 PM, Smart Bar, 3730 N. Clark, \$15-\$18. 21+*

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continued from 33

ago with house producer Melvin Oliphant III (aka Traxx), and in a recent interview with music site Strange Sounds From Beyond, he likens their work to the films of twisted, cheeky B-movie horror director Frank Henenlotter. “I show up with my deformed Siamese twin brother attached to my waist and Melvin tries to pry it off me,” Wanzer says. “He can’t . . . so we use him to our advantage.” In a similar act of brazen depravity—you might even call it sadistic—Mutant Beat Dance released their self-titled debut “album” this past November in the form of a six-disc box (on Dutch label Rush Hour) containing more than two hours of music. Wanzer and Traxx started collaborating in the mid-2000s and releasing music as Mutant Beat Dance a few years later. The group’s members—who now include Steve Summers, a prolific producer from the east coast who joined after moving to Chicago a few years ago—all have individual reputations in the international underground dance scene, which meant that their debut together would leave an impression regardless of its absurd length (and painful price). On *Mutant Beat Dance* the three producers create a smoldering, burbling, constantly shifting concoction that occasionally sounds like a Frankensteined synthesizer’s last hurrah before the Dumpster—yet they usually inject a pulse that could get even the most stoic clubgoer moving. Wanzer, Oliphant, and Summers are all experimental-minded weirdos, but the MBD box set is so massive that they were almost guaranteed to hit less-subversive sweet spots on a few songs—such as “Feed the Enemy,” which rides a sinister, straightforward rhythm beefed up by LCD Soundsystem multi-instrumentalist Tyler Pope and drummer Patrick Mahoney. —**LEOR GALIL**

ULTHAR *Vukari, Barren Heir, and Ikaray open. 9 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$8. 17+*

The cover art for *Cosmovore*, the latest album from Oakland metal trio Ulthar, is immediately arresting: it’s an illustration of a group of plantlike monstrosities that each appear to be vomiting nervous systems made of fibrous bundles and gaping maws. It’s from a work called *The Mountains of Madness 3* by fantasy artist Ian Miller, who got his start illustrating the covers of paperbacks by horror author and noted racist H.P. Lovecraft—though more people might be familiar with his contributions to the 1988 Games Workshop sourcebook *Realm of Chaos* (a title Bolt Thrower borrowed for the album they released the following year). Ulthar also pulled their band name from a Lovecraft story, and they expertly utilize the straight-ahead bludgeoning style perfected by Bolt Thrower as part of their multifaceted approach to death metal. The title track of *Cosmovore* (and what’s a cosmovore if not a “World Eater” on a grander scale?) kicks off with a thrashy riff from guitarist Shelby Lermo that’s soon joined by a flurry of blastbeats from drummer Justin Ennis, formerly of Tombs and Mutilation Rites—who then nimbly shifts into a punishing groove flanked by ominous tremolo effects. The guttural vocals mirror the drumming as they shift from percussive howls to prolonged screams. It’s a tiny microcosm of extreme metal, mixing black, death, grind, and thrash in the space of a dizzying 30 seconds. Ulthar maintain this concise inventiveness throughout the rest of the song, and indeed the rest of the album—making it one of the most exciting death-metal releases in recent memory. —**ED BLAIR**



Wild Belle
 LESLIE KIRCHHOFF

SUNDAY21

DAVE DAVIES See *Saturday*. *White Mystery* opens. 8 PM, City Winery, 1200 W. Randolph, \$45-\$65. **AL**

WILD BELLE Jeffertitti's Nile opens. 9 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$25. 18+

As Wild Belle, siblings and Chicagoland natives Natalie and Elliot Bergman construct a tropical pop sound that draws from rocksteady, reggae, dub, dancehall, West African music, and more. The eclectic mix is unified by Natalie's smoky, sultry voice and Elliot's equally sexy baritone saxophone and electrified kalimbas. For their brand-new third LP, *Everybody One of a Kind*, the Bergmans eschewed outside producers, opting to work almost exclusively on their own in Elliot's Chicago and LA studios. The result is what Natalie recently described to me as a "fully realized" version of Wild Belle—one that's more airy, more down-tempo, and even more eclectic. Album opener "Rocksteady" is a breezy, spacey jam that builds off a steady bass groove and Elliot's infectious baritone hooks while Natalie croons about being whatever her lover needs. After two more colorful numbers that sound like they were recorded in a rain forest, the pace slows with "Tumbleweed," a sorrowful yet seductive ballad where Natalie sings of two performers kept apart by demanding travel schedules: "When the sun goes down / That's when I need you the most / On the top of this hill / I see the world, but I'm alone." *Everybody* is a playfully subdued ode to love, lust, and life that fits the vibe of the Bergmans' new home base in Los Angeles. For their homecoming show at Metro, the siblings will be joined by their talented backing band. —**SCOTT MORROW**

MONDAY22

SUNN O))) See *Pick of the Week*, page 32. See also *Friday*. *Papa M* opens. 7 PM, Rockefeller Chapel, 5850 S. Woodlawn, \$36. 17+

ANNA WEBBER Webber opens with a solo set, then plays a duo set with Katherine Young. 7:30 PM, Experimental Sound Studio, 5925 N. Ravenswood, \$70. **AL**

Invoking the clock in a musical context raises certain expectations about timekeeping, but composer and woodwind player Anna Webber subverts them on her new *Clockwise* (Pi). She rarely has percussionist Ches Smith play a steady groove for long—instead he rushes the tempo, changes cadences, drops in brief silences, and switches constantly among vibes, timpani, and drum kit. The rest of the six-piece ensemble negotiates similarly unpredictable terrain. But the album remains true to its title in this respect: its pieces could not unfold in any other sequence. Inspired by the percussion music of contemporary classical composers, including Edgard Varèse, John Cage, and Karlheinz Stockhausen, Webber's intricate compositions are full of movement and color. But since she is equally indebted to



La Dispute © POONEH GHANA

jazz, even the most irregular constructions imply a sense of swing. Webber displays a similar commitment to structural integrity and timbral complexity through her flute and tenor saxophone playing, so even though she won't be bringing her sextet out to Chicago, you can expect music that's just as rigorous and complete as if presented by the whole group. For this concert, part of Experimental Sound Studio's Option series, Webber will perform solo, then improvise with bassoonist Katherine Young; to close the evening, she'll participate in a salon-style discussion of her work. —**BILL MEYER**

TUESDAY23

LA DISPUTE *Gouge Away and Slow Mass* open. 6:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 1807 S. Allport, \$22.50-\$35. **AL**

A little more than 18 miles separate Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Lowell, a small manufacturing town to its east. Fulton Street is a patch of state highway M-21 that connects the two, and Jordan Dreyer, front man of celebrated Grand Rapids posthardcore band La Dispute, frequently traveled along it to visit his partner outside Lowell. His trips gave him plenty of opportunities to consider his surroundings. On "Fulton Street I," which properly opens La Dispute's recent fourth album and Epitaph debut, *Panorama*, Dreyer quietly contemplates the 1997 discovery of a woman's skeleton along Fulton smack-dab between Lowell and Grand Rapids. More than 20 years later, the deceased's identity remains unknown, and as Dreyer spikes the increasingly anxious song with incensed but empathetic howls, he brings depth and poignancy to the questions surrounding the case that linger to this day. This sort of approach is par for the course for La Dispute, whose sprawling albums build a self-contained world with its own center of gravity from mighty, massive songs whose fragility and vulnerability belie their bulk. On *Panorama*, La Dispute continue as they have since 2004—showing that even a familiar path can yield profound insights when explored with an engaged mind. —**LEOR GALIL** **AL**

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Amon Amarth, Arch Enemy, At the Gates, Grand Magus 10/7, 7 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM, 18+
Finn Andrews 6/15, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music
Roy Ayers 5/22-23, 8 PM, City Winery
Jon B. 6/14, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery
Band of Skulls 9/24, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM, 17+
Black Pumas, Los Coast 7/19, 9 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/26, 10 AM
Brian Blade's Life Cycles 9/26, 7 and 9:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM
Bonelang 6/21, 9 PM, Metro
BoomBox 5/3, 11:15 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Chicago House Music Festival day one with Mr A.L.I. & Carla Prather, Chip E, 8FatFat8 5/24, 6:30 PM, Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park
Chicago House Music Festival day two with Gene Hunt, Reel People Live, Tony Humphries, First Lady, and more 5/25, 2 PM, Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park
Chicago Philharmonic Chamber Players 4/28, noon, City Winery
Cinematic Orchestra 11/12, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM, 17+
Cracker, Ike Reilly 7/11, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School

of Folk Music
A.J. Croce 7/10, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 4/18, noon
Crude S.S., Riotous, Henry-xChinaski, Warfilth 4/27, 6:30 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Charlie Cunningham 9/24, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+
Demons & Wizards, Lizzy Borden, Tyr 8/28, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Digital Freshness with Khary, One Punch, Curtis Roach, DJ RTC, DJ Cash Era, DJ Scend 5/2, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Do Division Fest with Russian Circles, Why?, Skatalites, Meat Puppets, and more 5/31, 5 PM; 6/1-2, 1 PM, Division between Damen and Leavitt
Dumpstaphunk, Magnolia Boulevard 6/15, 11 PM, Metro
Eluveitie, Korpiklaani, Gone in April 10/6, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Filter, Pig, Paul Barker's Min-Dub Soundsystem, Street Sects, Haex 9/22, 7 PM, Metro, part of Cold Waves VIII, 18+
Freestyle Forever: Tim Spinnin' Schommer's Birthday Bash with TKA, Safire, Pure Pleasure, Chase, Mark Milan, Sammy Zone 5/24, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall
Bill Frisell 9/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM
Gloria Gaynor 8/9, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery
Terisa Griffin 7/13, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 4/18, noon
Hot Chip 9/13, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Griffin House 10/4, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM
Morgan James 6/2, 5 and 8 PM,

City Winery
Juice 7/12, 7:30 PM, Subterranean, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM
Sonny Landreth 7/28, 8 PM, City Winery
Lauv, Bulow 10/13, 7 PM, Riviera Theatre
Lindsay Lou 6/13, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 4/18, noon
Mike Love 7/17, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM
Mako Sica, Stander, Imelda Marcos 5/1, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Mariás 7/26, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 4/19, 10 AM, 17+
Nargiz 5/9, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Carrie Newcomer 6/9, 7 PM, City Winery
Nite, Panic Priest, Ghost Twin, DJ Vincent 5/19, 8 PM, GMan Tavern
Nitzer Ebb, Haujobb, Light Asylum, Klack, Wingtips 9/20, 7 PM, Metro, part of Cold Waves VIII, 18+
Conor Oberst, Joanna Sternberg 7/24, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 4/19, 9 AM, 18+
Joan Osborne 5/19, 5 and 8 PM, City Winery, performing songs of Bob Dylan
Paper Kites 10/14, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Thu 4/18, 10 AM, 17+
Pop Will Eat Itself, Chemlab, Acumen vs. 16Volt, Curse Mackey, Bootblacks 9/19, 7 PM, Metro, Part of Cold Waves VIII, 18+
Resonate with Derrick Carter, Roy Davis Jr., MC Question Mark, Dojo, and more 4/26, 9 PM, Metro
Sons of F.U.N.K. 6/14, 11 PM, GMan Tavern

Spill Canvas 6/16, 8 PM, City Winery
Sugarhill Gang 5/11, 7 PM, City Winery
Joanne Shaw Taylor 5/20, 8 PM, City Winery
Teen 5/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Test Dept, Severed Heads, Adult., Kaelan Mikla, Twin Tribes 9/21, 7 PM, Metro, part of Cold Waves VIII, 18+
Leon Vynehall 5/10, 10 PM, Smart Bar
Greg Ward's Rogue Parade, Ben LaMar Gay's Learn From Ghost with Sam Pluta and Jason Stein, Makaya McCraven (DJ set) 5/22, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
We Are One X-Perience honors Maze and Frankie Beverly 8/3, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery
Yacht & Bothered Boat Series with George Fitzgerald 7/27, noon, DuSable Harbor
Yacht & Bothered Boat Series with Habstrakt 5/26, 6 PM, DuSable Harbor

UPDATED

Jim James 5/23, 7:30 PM, the Vic, venue change; tickets purchased for the Riviera Theatre will be honored at the Vic Theatre, 18+
Van Morrison 4/23-25, 7 PM, Chicago Theatre, Thu 4/25 show added
Damo Suzuki's Network 5/4-5, 8:30 PM, Constellation, canceled; refunds available at point of purchase, 18+
Yann Tiersen 5/17-18, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, Fri 5/17 show added; Sat 5/18 sold out, 17+

UPCOMING

Acid Dad 5/14, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Cisco Adler 4/30, 7 PM, Schubas
Ages and Ages 5/31, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+
Ziggy Alberts, Garrett Kato 6/27, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Art Alexakis, Chris Collingwood, Max Collins, John Wozniak 6/5, 7 PM, City Winery
Architects, Thy Art Is Murder, While She Sleeps 5/25, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall
Juan Atkins 5/1, 9 PM, Thalia Hall, 18+
Toranzo Cannon 6/29, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Neko Case, Shannon Shaw 4/26-27, 7:30 PM, The Vic, 4/27 sold out, 18+
Rosanne Cash, Ry Cooder 6/18, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Chasms, Devon Church 5/24,

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9 PM, Empty Bottle
Mikal Cronin 6/1, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Crumb 5/2, 7:30 PM, Thalia Hall
Dehd, Hecks, Mavis the Dog 5/10, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Downlink, Al Ross, Eliminate, Phiso 6/14, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall 18+
Drab Majesty, Facs 5/17, 6:30 PM, Garfield Park Conservatory
Guerilla Toss, Blacker Face, Good Willsmith 4/25, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Judas Priest, Uriah Heep 5/25, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont
Juice Wrld 5/30, 6:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom
Oliver Kenna 5/21, 7:30 PM, Schubas
Killing Joke, Pink Slips 5/18, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge
Stephen Marley, Mystic Marley 6/9, 7 PM, Park West, 18+
Johnny Marr 5/13, 7:30 PM, The Vic, 18+
Mary Ocher + Your Government, Forced Into Femininity 5/21, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
New Found Glory, Real Friends, Early November, Doll Skin 6/23, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
NRBQ 6/21-22, 8 PM, Hideout
Ohmme, Bunny, Cold Beaches 4/27, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Anderson .Paak & Free Nationals, Noname, Thundercat 6/4, 7:30 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion
Maceo Parker 6/13, 7 and 9 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Picture This 5/5, 7 PM, Lincoln Hall
Jesse Rutherford 5/3, 8 PM, Subterranean
Saicobab 5/6, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
John Scofield's Combo 6/6 6/27, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Television 5/10, 7 and 10 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music
Whitechapel, Dying Fetus 4/25, 5 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Lizz Wright 5/14, 8 PM, City Winery
Yheti, Nastynasty, Eazybaked 5/3, 10 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Yo La Tengo, Minus 5 6/23, 7 PM, Temperance Beer Company, Evanston, 18+
Zveri 5/31, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

WHEN T.S. ELIOT wrote "April is the cruellest month," he wasn't thinking about what passes for spring here. But this time every year, Gossip Wolf breeds lilacs and grudgingly mixes memory and desire—while listening for new jams that sound like warmer weather. Singer-songwriter **Danielle Sines** and her beach-ready jangle-pop project, **Impulsive Hearts**, reliably provide! Last month, Sines and the band (drummer **Dan Julian**, bassist **Doug Hoyer**, violinist **Jess LeMaster**, and saxophonist **Fallon McDermott**) dropped the sun-dappled four-song cassette **MeToo: A Benefit for Resilience**, proceeds from which will support Chicago nonprofit **Resilience**, which helps victims of sexual violence. Impulsive Hearts will have copies at their free **Empty Bottle** show on Monday, April 22, with Bike Cops and Gal Gun.

On Wednesday, April 24, the **Harper Theater** in Hyde Park hosts **Footwork on Film**, a program of shorts devoted to the Chicago-born dance and sound. **Brandon "Manny" Calhoun** and **Wills Glasspiegel** of footwork crew the **Era** (which has also branched out into rap) will screen films they've made while researching the scene and its history; University of Chicago music professor **Seth Brodsky** will lead a discussion. Footwork originator **RP Boo** caps off the night with an all-vinyl set. The free, all-ages event starts at 7 PM.

Beloved Avondale bar and venue **Reed's Local** just turned five, and beginning Thursday, April 18, it celebrates with **Reed's Fest 2019**. Gossip Wolf loves pretty much all the 14 acts set to play across its three nights. "Flower punks" **Flesh Panthers** kick off Thursday, warming up for the likes of **Mama** and **Lasers and Fast and Shit**; **Platinum Boys** headline Friday's bill, which also includes **Das Dotz** (formerly Jen & the Dots); postpunks **No Men** close out Saturday, alongside **Salvation**, **Bow & Spear**, and more. Music starts at 8 PM every night; admission is a \$5 donation per show (or \$10 for a three-night wristband). —J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

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4/24: WONDER & SKEPTICISM (6PM-FREE), 4/24: RICH ROBBINS, 4/25: MAKAYA MCCRAVEN, 4/26: TOKYO POLICE CLUB, 4/27: MAYPOLE
FOLK FESTIVAL (2PM), 4/28: THE EVICTIONS, 4/29: SCORCHED TUNDRA X EMPTY BOTTLE PRESENT MONOLORD, 4/30: JUST IN DEMUS, 5/1: MAKO
SICA, 5/3: ORVILLE PECK, 5/4: GLITTER MONEY, 5/5: 312 UNES PRESENTS FILM SCHOOL, 5/6 @ CONSTELLATION: SAICOBAB
(7:30PM), 5/7: ZIEMBA, 5/8: WINTER, 5/8 @ AIC: STEPHEN MALKMUS (7PM), 5/9: WEAR YOUR WOUNDS, 5/10: DEHD (RECORD RELEASE),
5/11: BRIGHT LIGHT SOCIAL HOUR, 5/12: ROYAL TRUX, 5/13: WOONGI (RECORD RELEASE-FREE), 5/14: 312 UNES PRESENTS ACID DAD
NEW ON SALE: 5/2: RUBYHORNET X CLOSED SESSIONS PRESENT KHARY, 5/15: TEEN, 5/18: 312 UNES PRESENTS INDIAN, 5/22: GREG WARD •
BEN LAMAR GAY, 5/31-6/2 @ DIVISION & DAMEN: DO DIVISION STREET FEST, 6/1: MIKAL CRONIN, 6/13: DEAD MEADOW, 10/16: SHURA

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4.18 GRAHAM PARKER
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4.20 BRAD WILLIAMS

4.21 DAVE DAVIES
WITH WHITE MYSTERY

5.6-7 NANCY AND BETH STARRING
MEGAN MULLALLY AND STEPHANIE HUNT

5.8 MARIZA

5.10 GRIFFIN HOUSE

5.11 THE SUGARHILL GANG

5.12-13 THE NILS LOFGREN BAND

5.14 LIZZ WRIGHT

5.15 DAVID BROMBERG QUINTET

5.19 JOAN OSBORNE
SINGS THE SONGS OF BOB DYLAN

UPCOMING SHOWS

4.22 MAGGIE SPEAKS:
YACHT ROCK NIGHT

4.25-27 ERIC ROBERSON

4.28 CHICAGO PHILHARMONIC:
PINOT AND PIANO

4.29 BIG SUIT -TALKING HEADS
TRIBUTE

4.30 PJ MORTON - FEAT. THE AMOURS

5.1 JACK DEJOHNETTE, JOE
LOVANO, ESPERANZA SPALDING
& LEO GENOVESE

5.4-5 HERB ALPERT & LANI HALL

5.10 BURLESQUE NIGHT OUT 10:30 PM SHOW

5.16 HOWIE DAY

5.17 SARA EVANS & THE BARKER FAMILY
BAND - BLOODLINE TOUR

5.20 JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR

5.22-23 ROY AYERS

5.24 RAHSAAN PATTERSON

5.25 BIG BAD VOODOO DADDY

5.26 DEACON BLUES

5.30 ELVIN BISHOP'S BIG FUN TRIO

APR 23

A PURPLE TOUCH: LIV
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SAVAGE LOVE

My girlfriend once dated her married boss

Advice on when it's acceptable to dig through ancient e-mails

Q: When I first started dating my girlfriend, I asked her about past boyfriends and she said she hadn't met the right guy yet. After dating for nine years, I found out about a past boyfriend and looked through her e-mails. I found out she dated her married boss for three years. She broke up with me for looking and for judging her. I feel like she lied, and she thinks it was none of my business. We've been broken up for five months. She's reached out, but I can't get over my anger or disgust that she was someone's mistress. Am I a bad person? —**STILL ANGRY AND DISGUSTED**

A: Yup.

"Haven't met the right guy yet" ≠ "Haven't met any guys ever."

Almost everyone has done something they regret doing—although it's possible your ex-girlfriend doesn't regret fucking her married boss for three years, SAAD, and it's possible there's no need for regret. Sometimes people have affairs for all the right reasons. Sometimes abandoning a spouse and/or breaking up a home with kids in it, aka "doing the right thing" and divorcing, is the worse choice. Life is long and complicated, and it's possible for a person to demonstrate loyalty and commitment with something other than their genitals. Sometimes people do what they must to stay married and stay sane, and their affair partners are doing good by being "bad."

It's also possible that your ex-girlfriend made an impulsive, shitty, selfish choice to fuck someone else's husband. It's possible he's a serial philanderer, a cheating piece of shit, and then, after fucking him that one time, your girlfriend felt pressured to keep fucking him and wound up having a years-long affair with her married boss. And then, when it was all over, she stuffed it down the memory hole because she wanted to forget it.

It's also possible she didn't tell you about this relationship when you asked because she intuited—correctly, as it turned out—that you are, in your own words, a bad person, i.e., the kind of guy who would punish his girlfriend for having a sexual history, for making her fair share of mistakes, and for deciding to keep some things private. (Not secret, SAAD. *Private*.)

Finding out about a past boyfriend doesn't give you the right to invade your partner's privacy and dig through their ancient e-mails. Your girlfriend was right to break up with you for snooping and judging her so harshly. And she didn't even lie to you, dude! Her boss clearly wasn't "the right guy," seeing as

By Dan Savage

he was married and her boss, and the relationship ended before you two even first laid thighs on each other *nine years ago*.

I don't want to help you get over your anger and disgust. It kind of sounds like you want your anger and disgust affirmed . . . and I'm going to affirm the shit out of those feelings: Stay angry! Stay disgusted! Not because those feelings are valid but because those feelings prevented you from taking your ex back when she reached out. She may not know it, but she's better off without you, and here's hoping you stay angry and disgusted long enough for her to realize it.

Q: I'm a few months into OkCupid dating, and it's going well! I've stuck to two "automatic pass" rules: anyone who mentions my looks and nothing else in the first message and anyone with no face pic. It's worked out great so far. But I've noticed that most kinksters on OKC don't post face pics. I can understand this. I once came across a coworker on the site—didn't look, passed immediately—and I can imagine nobody wants their boss or coworkers to know they're looking for puppy play and CBT. Not everyone has the luxury of taking a risk like that. So I'm tempted to drop my "no face pic = pass" rule for kinksters. But then I imagine how that would go: "Chat, chat, chat. 'Hey, can I see a face pic?' Oh no, I'm not physically attracted to this person!" Then I have to awkwardly un-match and feel terribly shallow and guilty for a while. So do I keep my rule and pass on some very promising profiles without face pics to avoid hurting someone's feelings? Or do I bend the rules? I'm just not looking to hurt anyone in a bad way. —**NOT THAT KIND OF SADIST**

A: Lead with your truth, NTKOS: "Hey, we share a lot of common interests—BDSM, CBT, TT—but I usually require face pics before I chat. I understand why you may not be able to post your pics and why you would want to chat for a bit and establish trust before sharing pics with me privately. So I'm happy to chat so long as you're okay with the risk that I might pass after seeing your face pic. Still, even if we're not ultimately a sexual or romantic match, every kinkster needs some kinky friends!" 

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STUDIO

Large studio near Warren Park. 6804 N. Wolcott. Hardwood floors. Laundry in building. Cats OK. \$825/month. Heat included. Available 5/1. (773) 761-4318. www.lakefrontmgt.com

Large studio apartment near Loyola Park. 1329-41 W. Estes. Hardwood floors. Cats OK. \$825/month. Heat included. Available 5/1. (773) 761-4318. www.lakefrontmgt.com

Large studio near Morse red line for sublease. 6826 N. Wayne. Hardwood floors. Laundry in building. Pets OK. Sublease from 6/1-8/31. \$775/month. Heat included. (773) 761-4318. www.lakefrontmgt.com

1BEDROOM

Large one bedroom apartment near Loyola Park. 1341 W. Estes. Hardwood floors. Laundry in building. Cats OK. Available 5/1. \$995/month (heat included). (773) 761-4318. www.lakefrontmgt.com

MARKETPLACE GENERAL

FOR SALE

2007 mini coopers 2D hatchback \$6,500. Call 312-493-7058

SERVICES

EVENTS

Event Name: Sip 'n' Shop for Wives, Brides, Proms & Moms
Date/Time: Saturday, April 20, 2019 11 AM - 5 PM CST
Location: Juicy Luzu Sangria | 5435 West 110th Street #2, Oak Lawn, IL 60453
Description: Getting married? Preparing for prom? Looking for the perfect Mother's Day gift? Join us for a special Sip 'n' Shop pop-up shopping experience! FREE ADMISSION! RSVP URL: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/sip-n-shop-for-wives-brides-proms-moms-tickets-58463905114>

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State, has amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County on April 9th, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of VICKY'S BREAKFAST with the business located at: 11216 S. MICHIGAN AVENUE, CHICAGO ILLINOIS 60628. The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: RAFAEL NEGRETE 11216 S. MICHIGAN AVENUE, CHICAGO IL 60628 (5/2)



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FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:
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